SMART PEOPLE SMART PLACES

REALISING DIGITAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

MAIA BERESFORD

New Local Government Network (NLGN) is an independent think tank that seeks to transform public services, revitalise local political leadership and empower local communities. NLGN is publishing this report as part of its programme of research and innovative policy projects, which we hope will be of use to policy makers and practitioners. The views expressed are however those of the authors and not necessarily those of NLGN.

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FOREWORD

At O2, we believe that the right kind of investment in digital technology will have a real impact on social value for local government, its partners and the communities it serves. From policies and devices that enable staff to work more flexibly, to mobile apps and platforms that make it easier for people to navigate public services, we are already seeing the beginnings of a local revolution.

We commissioned this research from NLGN to explore the role of digital technologies in modernising councils. It is an area that we are passionate about.

Through our Local Government Digital Forum and Fund, we have worked with senior officers and members from across the UK to help the sector develop a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities presented by this agenda. As part of this, O2 has committed to supporting Newcastle and Buckinghamshire to develop two cutting edge digital solutions that we believe can deliver social value for many other authorities.

The report's findings resonate strongly with the insights we are gaining through the Digital Fund. This year, we received over 50 applications from more than 250 organisations; a sure sign that partnership working is key to the future of the digital agenda. The top priority for many of the applications was to improve the way councils engage with their citizens, helping local government to deliver better experiences at a time of austerity.

O2's Local Government Practice ensures that we can dedicate our resources to serving local government. We come at social challenges with a fresh perspective and a deep understanding of the unique demands placed upon public institutions. As a Government Procurement Service supplier, we are trusted by thousands of public sector clients to help deliver a transformative redesign of services, empowering citizens and employees to do more on the move.

The next few years will be critical for the development of digital in local government. This report sets out the scale of the challenge facing authorities

in updating their technology and their cultures for a new era of citizen engagement, but it also paints a compelling picture of the benefits on offer. We are delighted to have supported this work, and we look forward to supporting councils in realising the huge potential of mobile, networked technology.

MARK ADAMS-WRIGHT
MANAGING PARTNER LOCAL GOVERNMENT PRACTICE, O2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We live in a world where digital technology is an ubiquitous part of our daily lives. Digital hardware such as iPads, smartphones and computers, and the software applications that run on them, are connecting us to a global market at the touch of a button. Digital technology is helping us to consume products and undertake transactions quickly online, connect with people and share content from far away, work on the move, and be more efficient in the way we do business.

The promise of digital technology is that it provides local authorities with huge opportunities to transform the services that they provide and new ways to connect with the individuals and communities who use those services. In a time when councils have to do much more with fewer resources, digital can provide a way to improve outcomes whilst delivering efficiencies. The challenge ahead for local government is to understand how digital can aid innovation, harness the knowledge and good practice of the private sector, and make the most of the public's appetite for digital technology. We know that technology exists that can benefit councils. But this report flags up the importance of prioritising the people, not just products. This is necessary to ensure that the technology that is invested in meets the needs of councils and citizens, does so efficiently, and is fully utilised by both.

This report is the result of an NLGN research project which set out to explore the opportunities that digital brings local government and understand the progress made to date. Specifically the project aimed to:

- Understand the opportunities that digital provides local government to transform outcomes;

- Assess overall progress in utilising digital technology amongst councils;

- Highlight good practice and local authority innovation in the digital sphere, both in the UK and internationally;

- Explore the factors hindering progress; and

- Outline steps councils can take to drive the digital agenda forward.

METHODOLOGY

Our methodology involved a literature review, four roundtable dialogue discussions, and seven in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. The research was overseen by an advisory group comprised of the following members:

Raj	Mack	Head of Digital Birmingham	Birmingham City Council
Cllr Jason	Kitcat	Leader	Brighton and Hove City Council
Stephen	Hilton	Director of Connecting Bristol	Bristol City Council
Chris	Brophy	Partner	Capsticks
Carl	Haggerty	Digital Communications Manager /Chair of LocalGov Digital	Devon County Council
Keith	Townsend	Executive Director, Environment & Customer Services	London Borough of Ealing
John	Compton	Service Redesign Manager	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Brigette	Giles	Head of Resource Strategy	
Cllr David	Hopkins	Deputy Leader	Milton Keynes Council
Simon	Parker	Director	NLGN
Mark	Adams-Wright	Managing Partner, Local Government	
Norman	Mellor	Head of Client Management, Local Government	O2
Julieta	Viegas	Public Sector Manager, Enterprise Marketing	
Catherine	Howe	Chief Executive	Public-i
James	Blake	Chief Executive	St Alban's District Council
Amanda	Foley	Head of Human Resources, Customer Services and IT	
Cllr Colin	Noble	Cabinet Member for Finance	Suffolk County Council

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Digital can unlock **benefits** for councils in three overarching areas:

  1. The delivery of better and cheaper outcomes, especially through more integrated and person centred services;

  2. Engagement and empowerment of citizens and communities;

  3. Cleaner, greener and more economically vibrant places.

- **Councils are starting to grasp the digital agenda** and there are many examples of early success which are starting to build the case for digital local government.

- However, **councils currently lack the confidence and skills to invest in digital smartly and enact the culture change necessary for digital investments to be a success**. This presents a significant barrier to widespread digital transformation across the sector.

- The three key **barriers** identified that are hindering progress are:

  1. Skills and organisational culture

  2. Leadership

  3. Sector wide leadership and coordination

- To some extent **councils simply need to grasp the challenge in front of them**, and this report outlines good practice and a 'checklist' of steps which individual councils can draw upon to help them. These include recommendations to help councils:

  - Create a leadership environment and governance structure to make digital core to all government business;

  - Create a culture and workforce whereby staff and councillors are trusted to innovate with technology and are confident using and investing in it, and where citizen insight and evidence is used to manage risks;

  - Engage citizens in the co-production of digitally enabled solutions, and ensure they have the skills, means and inclination to use these.

- Yet whilst there is much that councils can do alone in relation to skills and leadership, we believe that **more coordinated sector-wide collaboration is necessary** to move the agenda forward. We therefore recommend a **review of existing digital initiatives and the establishment of a local government digital programme** to coordinate initiatives and foster collaboration across the sector. We also recommend the establishment of a **digital skills programme** to raise the profile of local government digital to professionals and draw skilled graduates into the sector.

DIGITAL CHECKLIST

Alongside these strategic recommendations we also identify a digital checklist which brings together a number of practical steps councils can take to drive the digital agenda forward in their areas.

STAFF SKILLS AND CULTURE CHANGE

- ☑ Build digital skills into all job specifications
- ☑ Support digital champions, wherever they may lie in the organisation
- ☑ Encourage personal usage of social media so as to crossover into professional practice
- ☑ Involve staff and reinforce benefits of digital transformations to service users and a positive vision from the start and from the top
- ☑ Be clear about information governance requirements and take time to create clear data sharing agreements with partners to overcome resistance
- ☑ Communicate the art of the possible with 'hands on' demonstrations and workshops to win over sceptical councillors and staff
- ☑ Make sure Democratic Services show councillors social media engagement as a matter of course, and encourage peer to peer transmission of skills from councillor to councillor
- ☑ Be honest with staff and councillors about the pressing needs to do things differently
- ☑ Use a discrete digital project to change the culture within the council more widely
- ☑ Learn from other councils – you're not alone

DIGITAL INCLUSION

- ☑ Tackle hardware, skills, connectivity and emphasise the benefits of digital to citizens
- ☑ Don't forget the importance of mobile friendly websites and services
- ☑ Remember assisted digital so that residents are not left behind
- ☑ Trust citizens with their own data and take seriously the benefits of personal data stores to overcome citizens' fears about data sharing
- ☑ Pool the resources available for digital inclusion from across local public services

EVALUATION

- ☑ Collect data on the costs and outcomes of digital solutions and make this available to other local authorities

DIGITAL SERVICE DESIGN AND COMMISSIONING

☑ Take time to understand and fully map service user needs and journeys before thinking of technological solutions

☑ Think smart to maximise the value of your contracts and future proof investments

☑ Make sure to safeguard and value data in contracts so that data is still owned by the council or can be easily accessed for free

☑ Procure for innovation by using small contracts and frameworks to build in flexibility and involve innovative SMEs, by negotiating risk-reward models with providers that focus on outcomes

☑ Open up useful data and engage citizens and social entrepreneurs through 'hack days' and challenges to co-produce digitally enabled service solutions

☑ Embrace 'agile' solution development, collecting feedback constantly and working iteratively to adapt solutions over time

☑ Enable joint contracting and commissioning by thinking ahead about contract end dates and by building relationships with public service partners early on

☑ Think creatively about types of collaboration, such as staged contracts, which enable other partners to enter into agreements later on once existing contract dates end

GOVERNANCE

☑ Appoint a cabinet member for digital

☑ Assign a named digital champion within the council who has a mix of technical and service based knowledge to lead on the issue

☑ Empower your digital champion to create a local digital strategy, ensure digital is embedded into all council plans, and establish programme boards on particular issues such as information governance

INTRODUCTION: A DIGITAL SOCIETY

We live in an increasingly digital society, where technology is embedded in many aspects of our lives. This chapter explores the social and policy context and outlines how digital technology is now seen as an essential part of government services.

Digital technology is transforming how we live. More people are now 'online' rather than 'offline' and, in 2013, 36 million adults in Great Britain (73 per cent) accessed the internet every day. To put this growing figure in context, this is 20 million more people than in 2006. Technology such as tablets and mobile phones are making getting online even easier. For instance, between 2012 and 2013 ownership of tablets such as iPads more than doubled, rising from 11 per cent of homes to 24 per cent. The average household now owns more than three types of internet enabled device, with one in five owning six or more.[1]

Even more significant is the way that the internet is enabling us to live - in 2013 72 per cent of all adults bought goods or services online, up from 53 per cent in 2008.[2] Clearly the majority of the public are using the internet, and the private sector is benefiting from the public's appetite for digital. Companies such as Google, Apple and Facebook are responding to this appetite and building businesses by creating digital hardware, software applications and infrastructure to enable more effective communication with customers. A wide range of businesses are now using digital platforms and technologies to improve their advertising, enhance their customer services and communication, streamline business processes, and enable faster and efficient payments and transactions.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

Historically government has been less quick to adopt digital technology as a core part of its business. However recent recognition of the important

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1 Ofcom, *Communications Market Report 2013* (2013) http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/market-data/communications-market-reports/cmr13/market-context/

2 ONS, *Internet Access - Households and Individuals 2013* (August 2013) http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_322713.pdf

benefits of digital mean that it is now considered integral to central government policies covering everything from service transformation to integrated health and social care to economic growth.

In recognition of the opportunities that digital presents for growth[3], and increasingly green growth, the government has put significant investment towards infrastructure which creates the conditions for the digital economy. This includes a range of measures set out in their Information Economy Strategy to improve digital inclusion, superfast broadband, 4G, and smart city and big data initiatives.[4]

This is not the only area where government is seeing the benefits of digital. A recent report found that moving services such as bill payment online could lead to savings of £1.8 billion annually.[5] As a result of this, following the 2012 Budget the government launched its Digital Strategy which committed government to a programme of 'Digital by Default' across public services. This was intended to lead to a world where digital public services are designed to be so straightforward and easy to use that they are people's natural first choice and predominate over face-to-face services.[6]

In central government much progress has been made on this agenda, through the creation of a single GOV.UK website and work on exemplar digital 'transactional services' such as visa application.[7] Furthermore, government has been busy working on procurement, digital capacity amongst civil servants, and digital inclusion and 'assisted digital' services.[8]

At the same time the government is also pushing for an increase in transparency through the greater publication of 'open data' online through

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3 NIESR, *Measuring the UK's Digital Economy with Big Data* (2013) http://niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/SI024_GI_NIESR_Google_Report12.pdf

4 See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/206944/13-901-information-economy-strategy.pdf - this measured the preparedness of the UK economy to use ICT to boost competitiveness and citizens' wellbeing.

5 Cabinet Office, *Digital Efficiency Report*, (2012) http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/efficiency/

6 Cabinet Office *Government Digital Strategy* (2013) http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/

7 Cabinet Office, 'Digital Transformation' https://www.gov.uk/transformation

8 Cabinet Office, *Government Digital Strategy: One Year On* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-strategy-annual-report-2013/government-digital-strategy-annual-report-2013

their Open Data Strategy and support of the Open Data Institute.[9] 'Open data' refers to the opening up of publicly held data on anything from spending decisions and statistics on crime to the geo-location of children's centres. Opening this up to public scrutiny is hoped to lead to improved outcomes as 'assertive citizens' critique data on government performance, demand more from services and build socially beneficial applications from this information.[10]

DIGITAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

For local government Digital by Default, open data, and digital software and hardware offer a host of opportunities for local people and places. Our research sought to: explore these opportunities in more depth; investigate how councils are currently rising to the challenge of unlocking these aspects of digital technology for their citizens; investigate what factors are preventing them from doing so more effectively; and outline what councils can do to scale up progress. We also sought to learn from international best practice, and understand how this can be applied in a UK context.

The report is set out as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Promise and local progress** – This chapter explores the promise of digital for local areas in more depth, and assesses how far councils are currently rising to the challenge of unlocking these for their places.

- **Chapter 2: Challenges** – This chapter explores factors identified in our research that are hindering councils' progress on the digital agenda.

- **Chapter 3: Recommendations** – This chapter outlines solutions and recommendations for councils to help them progress on their digital journeys.

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9 See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-data-white-paper-unleashing-the-potential and http://theodi.org/about-us

10 Social Market Foundation *Assertive Citizens: New Relationships in the Public Services* (2009) http://www.smf.co.uk/research/public-service-reform/assertive-citizens-new-relationships-in-the-public-services/; Paul Maltby 'What did Open Data Ever Do For Us?' (29th October 2013) http://data.gov.uk/blog/what-did-open-data-ever-do-us

1 PROMISE AND LOCAL PROGRESS

Our research showed that local government is starting to unlock the benefits of digital technology for their places, and innovative practice in the sector is beginning to emerge. Councils are progressing by using digital to enable the delivery of better outcomes more cheaply; to enable improved engagement and empowerment of citizens; and to progress the green and digital growth agenda. However the full potential of digital technology is still untapped and there is a long way to go before English local government catches up with Whitehall, let alone world leaders in the USA.

DELIVERING BETTER, CHEAPER AND MORE INTEGRATED SERVICES

Digital technology promises to deliver better, cheaper and more integrated services. Councils have begun to realise this potential by embracing the notion of 'channel shift'. Increasingly council websites and services are being revolutionised so that council tax payments move away from cheques and cash offices to direct debit and online payment systems, and citizens can renew library books online, report fly tipping and find out information about their rubbish collections all on council websites. Not only is this delivering better and quicker services and meeting residents' demand for online services, but it is also enabling councils to make significant budgetary savings. Indeed, a recent SOCITM survey showed that the estimated cost to local government of a contact averages at £8.62 for a face-to-face transaction, £2.83 for a phone transaction, but just 15 pence for a web transaction.[11] Given that local government collectively deals with 571.5million transactions per year, many of which are routine,[12] 'channel shift' is an important way councils can reduce costs.

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11 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport, p.6

12 See http://transactionsexplorer.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/department/local-govt

CASE STUDY: LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM CHANNEL SHIFT

In Newham citizen self-service is enabled with a redesigned and easy to use website with a 'My Newham' customer portal and account. This shows customers their account details and a log of their previous enquiries either through a web browser or smartphone app. This is linked to back-office records to show the status of enquiries, and customer data from various sources is joined using Master Data Management so that staff can quickly find customer records.[13] This has led to a clear reduction in contacts with the council – and as a result has enabled the council to make significant savings. Whereas in May 2011 the council recorded 20,945 face-to-face contacts and around 30,000 overall contacts, by May 2013 Newham had just 1,968 face-to-face contacts of a total of around 7,000.[14] Through their channel shift agenda, which incorporates the new website and CRM, as well as integrated systems shared with three other East London boroughs, Newham have saved £12 million per annum.[15]

Additionally councils such as Manchester and Devon are learning from GOV. UK and the design and content of their websites are being optimised so that those using them reach more of the information they need, and are able to do so faster. Bespoke web pages and applications aimed at particular population groups also exist. For example Reading's 'Elevate Me' mobile site exists to give tailored information to young people not in education employment or training.[16] Web apps such as Fix My Street[17] and What Do They Know[18] are also being accepted by councils, and mean residents no longer have to contact councils directly to make requests or report problems.

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13 Connell, G, CIO at London Borough of Newham and London Borough of Havering, 'Shared ICT Services and Channel Shift in East London'. Presentation to 'Major Cities of Europe Annual Conference June 3-5 2013, Ljubljana, Slovenia' http://www.majorcities.eu/conferences/2013-ljubljana/conference-presentations/ljubljana2013_tuesday_geoff_connell.pdf

14 Connell, G, CIO at London Borough of Newham and London Borough of Havering, 'Shared ICT Services and Channel Shift in East London'. Presentation to 'Major Cities of Europe Annual Conference June 3-5 2013, Ljubljana, Slovenia', Slide 23 http://www.majorcities.eu/conferences/2013-ljubljana/conference-presentations/ljubljana2013_tuesday_geoff_connell.pdf

15 See http://www.majorcities.eu/conferences/2013-ljubljana/presentations/tuesday-session-it-management-and-the-political-strategies

16 See http://www.elevateme.org.uk

17 See http://www.fixmystreet.com/

18 See https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/

Bespoke applications such as Birmingham City Council's smartphone app are a step better. This mobile app allows users to report problems such as potholes, request services such as delivery of recycling boxes, and check information about school term dates at the touch of a button. This provides opportunities for people who would not normally contact the council to do so, whilst also cutting down on additional paperwork for the council as the requests or reports made by residents are fully integrated with council back-office systems.[19] Increasingly council self-service activity is fully integrated with back-office systems to improve efficiencies for councils, and customer data is being joined up so that a full picture of customers is possible for practitioners.

Council adoption of mobile technology is also being used to try and increase efficiency. For instance, if staff such as social workers can access and enter data about clients 'on the move' on portable notepads this not only means they are better able to make on-the-spot assessments, but it also offers the potential to significantly reduce the time they spend at their desks on paperwork or replicating records onto desktop computers. Surrey County Council has trialed BlackBerry tablet apps for social workers and youth workers, and some councils operate schemes to allow the use of personal or council purchased mobile devices such as tablets in hospitals or workplaces.[20] Greater use of mobile technology can also mean that council staff can adopt more mobile working and thereby allow councils to use assets more wisely. In Devon for example digitally enabled mobile working is a key part of their estates strategy by which they hope to deliver a reduction of 29 per cent in running costs and 35 per cent in occupied floor area between 2012 and 2017.[21]

Moving to digital is about more than transactions and mobile working. Integrated and person-centred care is on the agenda for most councils. Integrating services and sharing information about the status of referrals or calls

19 See http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/app

20 Government Computing, 'BlackBerry PlayBook tablet app aims to save Surrey council £100,000' (21 March 2012) http://devices.governmentcomputing.com/news/2012/mar/21/blackberry-playbook-torch-app-surrey; Surrey County Council, 'Surrey trials app for new BlackBerry PlayBook tablet' (1 June 2011) http://news.surreycc.gov.uk/2011/06/01/surrey-trials-app-for-new-blackberry-playbook-tablet/; Thurrock Gazette, 'Ipads set to be introduced at hospital' (8th April 2012) http://www.thurrockgazette.co.uk/news/9631402.iPads_set_to_be_introduced_at_hospital/; Government Computing 'BYD Coming to Hampshire this Autumn' (2nd May 2012) http://www.governmentcomputing.com/news/2012/may/02/byod-hampshire-county-council

21 Devon Council, 'Estates Strategy 2012-2017' (2012) http://www.devon.gov.uk/estatesstrategy.pdf

made; about user needs, case histories, records or test results; and information about existing service involvement, offers great promise for improving care. All of this can be done through the use of secure, digital technology. It promises less duplication, faster and more informed safeguarding assessments and diagnoses and more timely and suitable interventions.[22]

CASE STUDY: E-ESTONIA

In the last 30 years Estonia has become a world leader in technology. It has digital services across government. With regards to healthcare in particular, Estonia's system has been revolutionised by locally developed e-solutions, which bring convenience, savings and better services to patients. Estonia has an Electronic Health Registry (EHR) system which combines patient data from different sources, and makes it quickly and readily available to practitioners and the patient through a Patient Portal. This gives the patient an element of control over their treatment at the same time as protecting privacy, and also enables patients to elect another trusted individual to access their records.

The EHR also all links with an e-Prescription system, and is enabled by a national ID Card project and the X-road. This is a tool which enables decentralised databases to interact, by allowing users to write to multiple databases, transmit large data sets and perform searches across several databases. As well as integrating e-services, this means that institutions are not locked into any one type of database or software provider.[23]

Whilst not the 'magic bullet' to integration, digital technology can enable faster and more flexible flows of information to facilitate integration. At the most basic level, councils are improving the way data is shared by using unique identifiers for recording information about individuals across different

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22 Monitor, *Enablers and Barriers to Integrated Care and Implications for Monitor*, (2012) http://www.monitor-nhsft.gov.uk/home/news-events-publications/our-publications/browse-category/guidance-health-care-providers-and-co-23 ;The Health Foundation, *Does Clinical Coordination Improve Quality and Save Money?*, (2011) http://www.health.org.uk/publications/does-clinical-coordination-improve-quality-and-save-money; http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_133124

23 See http://e-estonia.com/the-story/digital-society/healthcare/

systems. This can make cross referencing of records between systems easier, and the universal use of the NHS Number across health and social care is an ambition of the Children's Health Outcomes Forum.[24] But some councils are starting to join-up information about service users with the aid of digital solutions such as master data management tools which connect all the records for an individual from across different organisations or systems in a central database or hub. And whilst not the norm, in other councils shared software systems across departments or public services, and the use of interoperable systems with specified open Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) which facilitate information flows between different systems, are becoming more common. Innovative 'add on' software applications such as Patchwork and Tyze are being used by councils too.

CASE STUDY: PATCHWORK AND TYZE

Patchwork is a simple web based application which connects professionals working with vulnerable children and families. It enables professionals to share contact details, record agency involvement with a family and raise 'concern' flags so as to co-ordinate their involvement around a family and improve safeguarding. Patchwork is used by a number of councils including Staffordshire and Surrey.[25]

Tyze is a similar app used in Camden primarily aimed at vulnerable adults and those working with or caring for them. Tyze is a personal network for carers and the person being cared for, which allows the individual and their network (family, friends, neighbours, professionals) to communicate with each other, schedule appointments with a shared calendar viewable to all involved, and share files such as shopping lists or prescription pick up times, or updates about the person's wellbeing.[26]

24 Department of Health, *Integrated Care: Our Shared Commitment*, (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/198748/DEFINITIVE_FINAL_VERSION_Integrated_Care_and_Support_-_Our_Shared_Commitment_2013-05-13.pdf, p.37

25 See http://wearefuturegov.com/2013/05/patchwork-kicks-off-in-surrey/; http://patchworkhq.com/blog/tag/sg20/

26 The Guardian, 'Online networks that link care professionals, families and volunteers' (9th October 2013) http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2013/oct/09/online-network-care-professionals-families-volunteers] ; see http://camdencarechoices.camden.gov.uk/i-need-help-with/living-at-home/staying-independent-at-home/tyze-personal-networks/tyze-personal-networks.aspx ; see http://tyze.com/

Councils are also starting to use digital technology to help better assess service users' needs, and help them navigate public services in their areas. For example in Buckinghamshire they are developing an app with the support of O2's Local Government Digital Fund which will help residents and the staff that work with them to understand more fully the impact that benefit changes will have on them, and which is intended to signposts service users who enter their details towards tailored services who can support them.[27] FutureGov's 'Lantern' app which is currently being developed aims to fulfil a similar purpose by signposting to tailored community resources following an online self-assessment of social care needs.[28]

ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES

A key finding from our research is the huge opportunity that digital provides councils to forge new relationships and strengthen existing ones with citizens and communities in their areas. Transforming government services and websites does not just lead to lower costs for government and better outcomes for service users, but also leads to better engagement with citizens and increased community resilience.

Many of the apps and digital solutions already mentioned, such as Fix My Street, are enabling councils to engage with citizens differently by enabling easier and more immediate sharing of views and problems and participation in decision-making. This is also enabled by social media. Citizens now expect councils to be responsive to social media, and some councils and councillors are responding by using Twitter and Facebook to form a new dialogue between council and citizen as residents are able to use these platforms to request services, find out information and report problems to councils and politicians. These platforms all enhance transparency, as requests are visible to all and councils' progress in addressing issues can be openly monitored.

Digital technology is boosting more formal democratic engagement and public participation. Rather than walking through the cold to a council office to take part in a council meeting, in councils such as Brent, busy citizens

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27 See http://cio.governmentcomputing.com/news/newcastle-and-bucks-councils-win-share-of-digital-expertise-4177530

28 See http://www.thisislantern.com/

can stream council meetings and send in questions or comment on these in real-time online through Twitter.[29] They can also engage with politicians and participate in budget setting or consultations using other digital services or apps. Already apps such as 'Show Me The Money' visualise public data about spending decisions, and others online tools such as 'Budget Ballot' help facilitate participatory budget setting.[30]

Councils are also exploiting the collaborative and networking capabilities of social media platforms, and open data, to enable collaborative, citizen led solutions to community issues which enhance independence. For example as part of Connecting Bristol's B-Open initiative, Bristol City Council released data on the local terrain. This led to the development, in collaboration with Media Sandbox and the University of Bristol, of an app called 'Hills Are Evil' which gives people with restricted mobility, cyclists, wheelchair users, and people pushing pushchairs the ability to identify the most appropriate route between two places and avoid certain areas such as cobbles or steep hills.[31]

Furthermore, councils are also recognising the ability of digital to connect citizens to each other – to build community resilience and capacity and respond to local need. Tower Hamlets for example, is utilising solutions such as Casserole Club,[32] an app which puts citizens in touch with eachother to share extra portions of home cooked food with others in their area who are not as able to cook for themselves. Networking solutions can also be especially useful at times of crisis when local people are often best placed to help each other quickly and share important knowledge.

In the Philippines an app called RapidFTR processes information about missing children in disaster situations, and has been used by Unicef to help reunite lost children.[33] But closer to home, simple social networking forums are being used in Cornwall to spread advice and updates about flooding.[34]

29 PR Week 'Brent aims to be first London council to integrate Twitter with live meeting streaming' (4 October 2013) http://www.prweek.com/article/1215115/brent-aims-first-london-council-integrate-twitter-live-meeting-streaming

30 See http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/reboot-britain

31 See http://www.watershed.co.uk/dshed/hills-are-evil ; http://www.local.gov.uk/local-transparency/-/journal_content/56/10180/4049888/ARTICLE

32 See http://www.casseroleclub.com/

33 The Guardian 'Separated from your family in a natural disaster? There's an app for that' (27 December 2013) http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/dec/27/rapidftr-disaster-situation-app-reuniting-families

34 See Cornwall Flood Forum's use of Twitter and Social Media http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=31852

And in response to recent storms, an app called FloodBud is being developed with the support of Nominet to spread the word about a volunteering site called floodvolunteers.co.uk via Twitter. It works by finding users who are near to flood affected areas (who are likely to still have internet connectivity and know people who are in need of help) and tweet them information to encourage volunteering.[35] Councils are starting to support initiatives like these and embed them into their own signposting and web estates so as to reduce demand on their services.

CREATING GREENER AND MORE ECONOMICALLY VIBRANT PLACES

Through the use of smart sensors and open data in urban planning, councils are starting to use digital to enable greener, more efficient towns and cities. For example in areas such Glasgow they are capturing and opening up data to improve the city's real-time operations with a city dashboard and a management system with a 'MyGlasgow' dashboard public window on the city for citizens. They are also delivering advanced street lighting to address community safety and perception of crime, and enhance building energy efficiency to provide affordable warmth.[36] Birmingham is taking a similar approach, and is using smart technology to improve the efficiency of traffic flows. Over 500 traffic related sensors linked to a citywide Wi-Fi network cover signal junctions, traffic signs, car parks and CCTV and are all linked to a single control room. Along with parking sensors which are being used in a trial across the city, these are giving motorists real time data on where on-street parking is available and helping the city control flows of traffic.[37]

The economic benefit of digital initiatives is potentially large. Recent estimates suggest that if the digital and creative industries in the UK are pulled together, these have increased by 2.8 per cent since 2008 to 6 per cent of GDP. This can be compared to the financial services industry, which dropped from more than 10 per cent of British GDP to 9.4 per cent in 2011.[38] The tech industry is already large in a number of local areas such as London, Manchester, Birmingham and Brighton. But smaller local clusters also exist in places such as Basingstoke,

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[35] See http://www.nominettrust.org.uk/knowledge-centre/blogs/floodhack

[36] See https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-initiative-to-support-40-billion-smart-cities-in-the-uk

[37] See https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-initiative-to-support-40-billion-smart-cities-in-the-uk

[38] The Guardian Professional Network 'Britain's Digital Economy. (29th July 2013) Silicon Roundabout and beyond' http://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2013/jul/29/britain-digital-economy-silicon-roundabout

Middlesbrough and Aberdeen.[39] By following international exemplars such as New York's 'Silicon Alley', and investing in the conditions for growth, local areas such as Bristol are beginning to invest in growing the digital economy for the wider benefit of their places. Indeed, Connected Bristol is a unit in Bristol City Council's Digital Futures Directorate, which has been established to bring together the council's work on Green, Economic, Digital and International issues, with the aim being to ensure that Bristol and the surrounding area benefits from a world-class, inclusive green and digital economy. In Bristol supporting digital technology through investment in broadband and free Wi-Fi, investment in a skilled digital workforce and universities, and other aspects is considered crucial to attracting digital businesses and is central to their Economic Development plan.[40] But the focus on smart and digital technologies is not just intended to boost growth but also to help the city meet a target to reduce CO2 emissions by 40 per cent by 2020.[41]

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK CITY'S 'SILICON ALLEY'

New York City's 'Silicon Alley' is a geographic hub in the Brooklyn area of New York, which is starting to spread into the financial district. It includes a clustering of digital businesses, such as Buzzfeed and Tumblr.[42] Digital media has been the fastest-growing segment of the NYC scene, with at least 121 start-ups funded between 2007 and 2011. Money has flowed into the area, and New York is the only US tech scene to see a rise in venture capital deals between 2007 and 2011. Employment in 'high-tech sectors' has also risen by over 90,000 between 2005 and 2010.[43] In 2013 there were 262,000 workers in the New York tech/information sector, contributing almost $30 billion annually in wages to the local economy.[44]

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39 NIESR *Measuring the UK's Digital Economy with Big Data*, (2013) http://niesr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/publications/SI024_GI_NIESR_Google_Report12.pdf p. 31

40 See http://www.investinbristol.com/pdf/Growth-and-Opportunity-in-Bristol.pdf

41 See https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-initiative-to-support-40-billion-smart-cities-in-the-uk

42 Slate 'How New York Became the Silicon Valley of the East' (10th Dec 2013) http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/the_next_silicon_valley/2013/12/new_york_city_tech_boom_how_it_became_the_silicon_valley_of_the_east.2.html; Demos, *A Tale of Tech City: The Future of Inner London's Digital Economy* (2012) http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/ataleoftechcity

43 Bowles and Giles, Centre for Urban Futures, *New Tech City* (2012) http://nycfuture.org/research/publications/new-tech-city

44 http://www.mikebloomberg.com/files/buildingadigitalcity.pdf p.

The area has grown with the support of local government, and Mayor Michael Bloomberg made the development of 'New York Tech City' a key project for his administration. The mayor invested in the rapid expansion of broadband, free public Wi-Fi, and the release of open data. Incubators and seed funding such as the NYC Entrepreneurial Fund (which matches £3m of public money with £19m from a local venture capital firm to give NNYC based technology start-ups with early stage capital) and government support for workspaces, mentoring and networking services also contributed to the growth of the sector. A two million square foot site on Roosevelt Island was also donated by Bloomberg for a new applied science and engineering campus, which was developed with Cornell University and Technion-Israel Institute of Technology. A second campus, the Centre for Urban Science and Progress, was opened in 2012. This is a public private research centre dedicated to 'urban informatics' which is intended to be a 'laboratory and classroom' to enable students to observe, analyse, and model cities in order to optimise outcomes, prototype new solutions, formalise new tools and processes, and develop new expertise.[45]

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

These examples demonstrate that good practice is starting to emerge, however we know that councils can scale up initiatives and do much more. There is significant evidence of untapped potential in councils, across a range of areas.

WEB, MOBILE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Arguably residents see council websites as an online information tool rather than an alternative way to access services. Despite reported use of websites to gain information, often the quality of information on council websites does not satisfy needs and as a result the 'failure rate' of online channels, whereby users give up online and instead revert to traditional means of communicating with the council, is often high.

45 Mandel, M, *Building A Digital City: The Growth And Impact Of New York City's Tech/Information Sector,* (2013) http://cusp.nyu.edu/about/ p.3-4

In a recent survey, less than one in ten respondents said they had interacted with their local authority through the web, mobile apps or social media.[46] By contrast, nearly two thirds opted to use more traditional methods, such as going into the council offices or calling on the telephone, to get the information or support they need because they feel the digital services provided by their council are either unreliable, or simply unavailable.[47] Furthermore, 84 per cent of people claimed that the information they receive from their local authority is often out of date, incomplete (82 per cent) or simply not relevant to them (71 per cent).[48]

Local government has also been slow to adapt to mobile technology. While people are increasingly using mobiles to access council websites, in 2014 only 31 per cent of these sites meet basic standards for mobile access.[49] This is having an impact on customer satisfaction: in another survey, over two fifths (43 per cent) of people surveyed reported being frustrated that they still can't access the information they need from local authorities on their mobile or tablet.[50]

The same can be said for social media. With 33 million UK Facebook users (53 per cent of UK residents) and 34 million UK Twitter accounts, social media represents a major communication channel for councils.[51] But use of these channels by local authorities to engage citizens is especially low.

Just 2 per cent of people surveyed reported interacting with their local council on Facebook and 1 per cent via Twitter, and of those that had, 74 per cent said they had been left frustrated by the slow response times.[52]

46 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport p.5

47 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport, p.5

48 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport, p.6

49 See http://www.socitm.net/news/better-connected-2014-preview-5-mobile-performance

50 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport, p.7

51 UK Marketing Network 'Social Media Stats for 2013 Revealed ' (Jan 15 2013) http://www.ukmarketingnetwork.co.uk/profiles/blogs/uk-social-media-stats-for-2013-revealed-1

52 O2, *Giving the Public What They Want: O2 Digital Communities Report 2013*, (2013) http://connect.o2.co.uk/digitalcommunitiesreport, p.5

PERSON CENTERED DATA

In the NHS there are moves to merge big health datasets, and make sure that data held on GP systems is being opened up and shared between professionals.[53] But when it comes to integration between councils and the NHS, and even within councils, multiple siloed databases of separate information are still the norm. This was echoed in our qualitative research with local government stakeholders. As one council officer we spoke to stated, *"when you peel back the surface [and review all the multiple siloed databases] it's quite scary!"*

Additionally whilst 'My Account' portals on council websites are increasingly common in newly designed council websites, the extent to which customers are involved with, let alone in real control of, their data is slight. Councils – and other public services such as the NHS – are arguably missing out on opportunities to 'get citizens on board' with data sharing by neglecting to give them more flexible and immediate control over their own data and how it is used. One of the most promising avenues to enable person centered ways of working and the sharing of personal information other than that which is statutorily necessary to be shared, is the development of Personal Data Stores. However at present very few councils are utilising these functions.

CASE STUDY: PERSONAL DATA STORES

Personal Data Stores are applications that hold individuals' personal data. Today, we have our data spread over a wide range of places, in the private and public sector. For instance data about us might be held by our GP, by a hospital or by the council. Instead of centralising all these records on an individual held by different agencies and providers in a master record held by public bodies, Personal Data Store apps like MyDex and Qiy put this data in one place, in the hands of the user, who is then able to choose how different data is shared with organisations or professionals they interact with.[54]

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53 NESTA, *13 Predictions for 2013 – How did we do?* http://www.nesta.org.uk/news/13-predictions-2013/2013-predictions-how-did-we-do

54 Mydex, *The Case for Personal Information Empowerment: The Rise of the Personal Data Store, A Mydex White Paper*; (2010) http://mydex.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/The-Case-for-Personal-Information-Empowerment-The-rise-of-the-personal-data-store-A-Mydex-White-paper-September-2010-Final-web.pdf; Wired, 'How "Patients Know Best" is putting your health back in your hands' (31st January 2013), http://www.wired.co.uk/magazine/archive/2011/03/start/power-to-the-patient; See https://www.qiy.nl/en

These platforms support citizen empowerment and engagement in their own care. They can also enable smoother customer journeys as users can choose to release existing data or information to new professionals they meet, rather than having to repeat their story for each practitioner. These apps can also hold data about individuals that might be collected by Facebook, Amazon, the bank, or through 'wearable tech' or the Wi-Fit for example. Only one high security log in is needed for logging in to all of an individuals' personal accounts, which keeps things simple and means that individuals don't need to spend time entering all their personal information every time, for example, they apply for new vehicle registration or a new parking permit. It can also give important insight to individuals about their spending, saving or health habits, to help inform behaviour in the future. For organisations like councils, there are many potential benefits including access to more reliable and more complete data.

At the moment personal data stores are still a growing technology, and require cooperation from organisations such as councils and businesses to become 'relying parties' and directly share data with individuals in order for them to be rolled out and of most use to citizens. The government's MiData initiative set up to demonstrate the benefits of personal data stores to businesses and other organisations and encourage their involvement with the initiative.[55]

SMART TECHNOLOGY AND OPEN DATA

Additionally, the benefits of smart sensor technology are far from being optimised and councils in the UK can learn from those abroad. For example in Songdo in South Korea, a new city is being built which uses smart sensors to measure everything from air temperature and solar activity, to traffic flows and the location of pedestrians on sidewalks. The city architecture then regulates in response, for example by adjusting air vents and blinds, or turning off unnecessary street lighting when there are no pedestrians in the vicinity.[56]

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55 See http://blogs.bis.gov.uk/midata/
56 Townsend, A, *Smart Cities* (2013) Norton and Co, NY, p.36

Whilst this vision of a highly planned smart city from scratch might be unrealistic for the UK, we could learn from other places such as Rio de Janeiro, Chicago, and Boston who are using smart sensors more widely for public benefit. In Chicago for example they use sensors on snow plows to allow citizens to track their progress and enable better route planning in winter. [57] And in Boston the 'Adopt A Hydrant' app encourages citizens to adopt a fire hydrant that needs to be kept free of snow during the winter, and sends texts and emails to adoptees when a hydrant needs clearing.[58] In contrast to these cities, in the UK the market for smart technology is not optimised and SMEs are going abroad to deploy pilot projects because utility companies and local authorities are not willing to trial smart products and technologies.[59]

Missed opportunities in the deployment of smart technology is not only visible in the field of urban design, but also applies to assisted living. Technologies such as carpets which use sensors to monitor elderly residents' gait in order to alert about and predict falls have the potential to radically drive down demand for social care and health services.[60] Indeed, in the UK the use of telehealth (just one of the core assisted living technologies) across the NHS could result in £1 billion in annual savings with hundreds of thousands of patients' lives improved significantly.[61] If wider assisted living technologies and the impact on social care is also considered, the saving could be even greater. But at present a recent report suggests these technologies are still not being optimised in the UK.[62] Reasons for this include low awareness of the benefits of these technologies amongst CCGs, GPs and local authority staff; a supply chain fragmented between different bodies (for example individual councils, local NHS trusts) which prevents economies of scale; and a lack of staff skilled to assess for and install these technologies, amongst other issues.[63]

57 Townsend, A, *Smart Cities* (2013) Norton and Co, NY, P.213

58 Townsend, A, *Smart Cities* (2013) Norton and Co, NY, P.213

59 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills *BIS Research Paper No 136: The Smart City Market – Opportunities for the UK* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-city-market-uk-opportunities

60 See http://www.manchester.ac.uk/aboutus/news/display/?id=8648

61 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills *BIS Research Paper No 136: The Smart City Market – Opportunities for the UK* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-city-market-uk-opportunities

62 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills *BIS Research Paper No 136: The Smart City Market – Opportunities for the UK* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-city-market-uk-opportunities

63 Department for Business, Innovation and Skills *BIS Research Paper No 136: The Smart City Market – Opportunities for the UK* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/smart-city-market-uk-opportunities

When councils do collect data through smart technology, or from their own more routine monitoring, often it is not shared with citizens so that they can make useful apps such as those used in Boston and Chicago. Progress in relation to open data is also far from embedded across the sector and is often confined to pilot or demonstrator projects which benefit from special funding. In Greater Manchester three councils are embarking on the Greater Manchester Data Synchronisation Project to release five star open data for public benefit with the support of the Future Cities Catapult.[64] But at the moment, whilst many councils are releasing 'two star' open data such as Excel datasets, very few are following Manchester and releasing the four or five star 'linked' data which is most useful for developers. In an LGA survey, two thirds of responding councils reported making more data available than they were statutorily obliged to share.[65] However most councils (61 per cent) published data in two and three star machine readable format, only one council published in four star open data formats, and at the date of the survey none of the respondent councils published five star linked data.[66]

64 See https://futurecities.catapult.org.uk/project-full-view/-/asset_publisher/oDS9tiXrD0wi/content/project-greater-manchester-data-synchronisation-project/?redirect=%2Fprojects
65 LGA, *Local Transparency Survey 2012* (2012) http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal_content/56/10180/3825698/ARTICLE, p.1
66 LGA, *Local Transparency Survey 2012* (2012) http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/local-transparency/-/journal_content/56/10180/3825698/ARTICLE, p.1

2 CHALLENGES

Whilst there is much good practice in existence, we have seen how the potential of digital technology is still untapped by councils. We wanted to know what was holding councils back from scaling up their use of digital technology to transform services and outcomes. Through our research roundtables and interviews we found that councils are not confident investing in digital technology, and historically have not always done so smartly. We found that skills and organisational culture, alongside leadership are key factors preventing councils from doing so.

Lack of skills and capacity to smartly commission and implement digital solutions means that products very often do not meet needs. This leads to a perception amongst risk adverse leaders that digital technology is especially risky which – together with gaps in understanding and small risk appetites amongst senior leadership – contributes to a vicious cycle whereby leaders are unwilling to invest in solutions that are more fit for the future. Whilst much of this relates to individual councils, it is not helped by the fragmented nature of existing cross-sector leadership on these issues, which misses opportunities to share good practice, drive forward the agenda, and minimise duplication of investments.

INVESTMENT

We know that funding is a scarce resource for most councils. Lack of funding to invest in new digital technologies is a key barrier for councils. Indeed 'lack of development funds' was cited as the second highest barrier hindering digital in a recent survey, cited by 59.4 per cent of respondents.[67]

But it is not just about lack of funding. Often the way that councils approach the process of investment in digital means that even when investment is made, it does not fully meet the needs of citizens or councils as intended or

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[67] UKAuthority, *Local Digital Today: A report commissioned by the DCLG*, (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252345/Local_Digital_Today.pdf, p.5

is not done in a smart or efficient way. At present many councils struggle to define the outcomes that they want these digital solutions to deliver. Often new solutions are not informed by the real needs of citizens, and councils fall into the trap of prioritising efficiency over customer journey process mapping. As a result digital solutions such as online transactions are sometimes simply 'tacked on' to existing services rather than being part of a full service redesign in which the potential of digital is matched to the behaviour and needs of users (both citizens and staff) throughout the process. This leads to wasted investment in products which do not meet needs to the extent that they could do.

"My view is that councils tend to develop CRM and so on based on what councils need not citizens […] It's always seen as an efficiency drive, but that disengages people as that's not something they care about"
(Director of Customer Services, Council)

"Sometimes services don't know what they need, and that can be challenging … Services say 'can the new CRM do this?' and I say 'what is it you want the CRM to do? Tell me the function and outcome you want' – and they say something vague like 'it needs to do case management' but I say 'what is that?' Some colleagues struggle defining the exact outcome they are looking for."
(Head of Customer Services, Council)

Furthermore, many councils do not safeguard and value data, and one council we spoke to mentioned how in the past they had missed out when the transport data held on a new system was no longer owned by the council, and had to be 'bought back' by them for further usage. As one council officer stated:

"Historically we have bought systems and not recognised that the real value is the data, and when we want that data we often have got to pay for it…"

Another clear issue is that because many councils think of digital investment in terms of investment in discrete digital 'products', contracted providers may deliver the digital product they were initially contracted to provide. However because providers are not expected or incentivised to innovate over time, procured solutions often do not evolve and over time may no

longer represent the best way of dealing with the problem. This is especially problematic when contracts are long and inflexible, as these 'legacy' contracts hinder the council from commissioning better digital solutions to their problems. Indeed, in the survey mentioned earlier, 'legacy systems and ICT infrastructure' were considered to be of greater importance than development funds and to be the greatest barrier hindering digital innovation.[68] Councils we spoke to echoed this finding, and suggested that local government is not yet procuring in a way that prevents the tenders of today becoming the legacy contracts of tomorrow.

This approach to developing digital solutions is often not 'agile' and iterative, and also tends to ignore the necessary ongoing role the council needs to play in making sure that solutions evolve in partnership so that they really meet needs. As one stakeholder who works with councils to develop digital applications commented:

"There is sometimes an approach to commissioning that somehow a manager can commission something and then a provider will lead on a solution and fix it, and this is just wrong. There's an approach of 'here's the money; fix it' rather than an acknowledgement that you need to work in partnership, that they will invest and you will work on it together to get the results wanted" (Digital provider)

CASE STUDY: AGILE DEVELOPMENT IN SURREY

'Agile development' is an approach to solution or service development that emphasises the iterative nature of developing a product over time, where iterations are worked on in 'sprints' or legs of time, and then are 'tweaked' in response to feedback after each iteration. The term mainly relates to the field of software development[69], but has similarities to other 'design thinking' approaches to service or product development, and the approach has relevance more widely.

68 UKAuthority, *Local Digital Today: A report commissioned by the DCLG*, (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252345/Local_Digital_Today.pdf
69 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agile_software_development

In Surrey, the product development company FutureGov used an agile approach for the development of a 'project dashboard' for Shift Surrey.[70] In preparation for the first iteration of the product, FutureGov gathered information about user stories, the data to be presented and the design the dashboard might take. Every week for four weeks the designers and developers met with the users to see if they were happy with the form the product was taking, if features needed changing or to be added, and then to agree what features to focus on for the next 'sprint' or week ahead. Every feature was tested in different browsers such as Firefox and Google Chrome to make sure technical blips were ironed out.

The benefits of this approach meant that project met users' needs, including those they did not think about at the start. As FutureGov staff pointed out in a blog post, 'when you build something from scratch, there's a lot of guesswork. Sometimes what users guess they want, is not what they thought it would be once it's built, or it is, but they change their mind and want something else … Agile can adapt to that, features are easily re-prioritised, added, or removed within the "Backlog". It means you are always building what the user wants now.'[71]

Additionally, the focus on councils as procurers of particular products from providers, rather than councils as partners and creators of the conditions for innovative community or market led solutions, leads to slow innovation. Rather than thinking more about communicating the outcomes they are aiming for and enabling innovative solutions through open data, open APIs, and open-sourced software, councils sometimes fall into the trap of throwing bureaucracy around digital by focusing on procuring specified products. As one council Web Manager stated:

"Part of it is about letting go – if change needs to happen the fastest way for it to happen is to simply get out of the way. We feel we have to be involved, and throw bureaucracy around it, and that takes years."
(Web Manager, Council)

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70 See http://dashboard.shiftsurrey.org/

71 Matthews, B, 'Agile Development and the Shift Surrey Dashboard: A Product Owner's View' (5th August 2013) http://wearefuturegov.com/2013/08/agile-development-and-the-shift-surrey-dashboard-a-product-owners-view/

Finally, siloed approaches to procurement can mean that investments are not coordinated across council departments. For example we heard that it is possible that two departments within the same council, or a related district and county, may both be procuring new CRM systems but be doing so separately. This not only leads to duplication but also inefficient investment; councils can leverage greater buying power by joining together activities.

WHY ARE COUNCILS FAILING TO INVEST SMARTLY?

Our research found that the two primary factors holding councils back from investing smartly in digital technology are skills and organisational culture, and leadership.

SKILLS AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Lack of in-house expertise to commission and implement digital solutions smartly presents a barrier to progress. This is lack of skills both in terms of in setting up digital solutions such as open data platforms that can handle five star linked data; but also skills to enable confident mapping and evaluation of the needs of service users and services, and translating these into digital capabilities for commissioning. As a private sector partner who works with councils noted:

"Councils don't necessarily have the skills to really work out the problems they need to solve, so they buy the wrong product, and spend two years with it working out new business processes, and then at the end are left with more problems" (Digital provider)

Councils lack the ICT expertise needed to be able to future scope and make sure investments are fit for the future. Digital technologies and the security requirements that surround these are constantly changing, and different IT suppliers have different operating systems, requirements and protocols, and all of these need to be navigated adeptly by skilled staff.

However, councils remarked on their "*real difficulty recruiting and retaining the best talent*" as they struggle to recruit and keep staff with the skillsets required. Worryingly, councils anticipate that this will be a growing issue in

the next few years as local government salaries cannot compete with those in other public sector and private sector organisations.

"Why is [keeping skilled staff] a challenge? We have less money to pay them with, so you have to have less highly skilled staff, or less skilled staff but more of them….And this will only get harder as the market and competition for tech staff grows". (Joint Head of ICT, Council)

"Increasingly, salary wise, we're finding a few of our skilled people are leaving and working for private companies. So reliance on external contractors who are more expensive is something that is a challenge for us."
(Head of Customer Services, Council)

As this comment suggests, lack of in-house expertise means that organisations often rely on consultants and large systems integrators[72] to put together their technological packages, but this can be expensive and these bodies often lack the in-house knowledge of services to act as challenging and informed clients.

To combat the technological skills deficit projects such as NESTA's Code for Europe[73] and the Future Cities Catapult Greater Manchester Data Synchronisation Project[74] are attempting to draw and embed skills in the sector by emulating the USA's successful Code For America programme. However, the reach of these is limited to a few areas, and at present Manchester is the only UK area listed on Code for Europe for 2014.[75]

CASE STUDY: CODE FOR AMERICA

Code for America (CfA)[76] is a non-profit organisation based in the USA which aims to develop the digital potential in American cities. It works with local governments in the USA and runs four key programmes

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72 Cabinet Office, *Creating an exceptional civil service - less bureaucratic and more skilled, digital and unified (2013)* http://publications.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/digital/strategy/
73 See http://www.nesta.org.uk/project/code-europe
74 See https://futurecities.catapult.org.uk/project-full-view/-/asset_publisher/oDS9tiXrD0wi/content/project-greater-manchester-data-synchronisation-project
75 See http://codeforeurope.net/cities/
76 See http://codeforamerica.org/about/

which together aim to connect citizens and governments to design better government digital services; encourage low risk settings for innovation; and support a competitive civic technological marketplace.

Their best known programme is the CfA Fellowship, which consists of a one year residency placing developers, designers, and researchers within local governments. Over the course of the programme, fellows and government partners build apps and inspire new thinking amongst public servants to tackle local issues. Cities pay $180,000 per year and in return receive the support of three CfA fellows. These fellows spend one month in central training, spend a period of immersion within their host cities, and then work together at a central hub to develop their applications.

In addition to this programme, CfA organise Brigades, a Civic Startups Programme, and a Peer Network. The Brigades are comprised of local volunteers and government employees who connect for regular hack nights, discussions, and app development; the Civic Startups Programme offers entrepreneurs mentorship in navigating the government procurement process and building sustainable businesses; and the Peer Network is a network for government officials and public servants to connect to share civic technology resources, best practices, and open data policies.

Code for America is supported by a range of donors, sponsors and the local authorities themselves, and engages young developers through a strong and high profile brand. Their fellowship has worked with 30 previous and current government partners, has led to the deployment of 50 apps, and their wider reach extends much further to local governments across USA.

This skills gap also translates from the back office to the front line. For example, our research found that many frontline staff had difficulty in using basic telephony systems, or understanding how to use social media. However whilst digital skillset amongst frontline staff may well be a problem, some external providers we interviewed considered this to be a 'red herring'. Most staff are used to using programmes such as Facebook and shopping online in

a personal capacity, and if digital products are as user friendly as they should be, basic technology skills should not be a problem for most. As one app developing stakeholder organisation commented:

"The technical skills of practitioners aren't really a problem. Middle managers sometimes think there is a frontline problem; that they won't want to engage in technology. But actually, staff all use Amazon and all sorts of systems and applications every day, and I think the idea that it is a barrier is myth and legend. We don't really train practitioners to use our product, as actually they don't really need it." (Digital provider)

Rather, the real barrier is a general fear and cultural resistance to change amongst some staff. This may especially be the case when the changes mean that existing responsibilities are altered as a result of digital technologies and restructuring. As one council stakeholder commented: *"it's not about technology, 99 per cent of the time it's about cultural change".* Other comments supported this view:

"What we now have is senior officers who understand the agenda more clearly, [but amongst others] there is sometimes a tendency to reinforce the 'as is', rather than the change agenda. So it's not just about converting the public, but the officers, especially if they have been with you a long time." (Head of Customer Services, Council)

"Sometimes the chief executive will be positive about it, and that will filter to directors and assistant directors who quickly get it, but middle managers might often be the barriers and it will take four months convincing them." (Digital provider)

In this respect councils sometimes lack the management capacity and ability to ensure that cultural resistance is overcome and staff fully utilise digital technology that is at their disposal. This is about change management, but also supporting an environment where digital culture is more widely encouraged and viewed with excitement. At present it is not uncommon for councils to have 'surfing policies' which restrict the use of social media and other digital platforms amongst staff; in such an untrusting and digitally backward environment it is unsurprising that new technologies are sometimes viewed with suspicion or disdain.

Information governance leadership is part of the problem here too. Where there is no clarity and leadership on this issue, frontline staff may be particularly fearful about adapting processes, especially in relation to data sharing.

LEADERSHIP

Many councils lack clear leadership around digital. Indeed, in a recent survey about local digital transformation, suppliers indicated that they wanted to see more leadership of the digital agenda from the very top of local government.[77] Across councils there is sometimes a lack of understanding at the top table about what digital technology can achieve and how it can benefit all aspects of council business.

This contributes to and is compounded by an absence of clear accountability and ownership of an overall digital agenda in councils. Responsibility usually sits either with the IT department, the web team, or customer services. But this can lead to a techno-centric approach, and there is a need for leadership to come from those who can link the technological aspects of digital to the everyday business and transformation of all council departments, ensure it is properly grounded in citizen needs, and is surrounded by organisational change which is needed for it to be properly implemented.

As one interviewee commented, *"one of the problems is that it's not clear who this should lie with – the IT strategists, those involved with IT procurement, or those involved in organisational development".* This lies in stark contrast to places like Boston, where digital technology is considered important to all government business and this is emphasised through the creation of a 'core team' – The Office of New Urban Mechanics – who sit centrally in the Mayor's Office and are able to push the digital agenda across the organisation.

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77 UKAuthority, *Local Digital Today: A report commissioned by the DCLG*, (2013) https://www. gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252345/Local_Digital_Today. pdf, p.4

CASE STUDY: BOSTON'S OFFICE OF NEW URBAN MECHANICS

The Boston Office of New Urban Mechanics is a small team which sits within the office of the Boston mayor. It is tasked with driving innovation in the city through technology and a focus on civic engagement, a 'personal touch' and opening up of public services. The team has been successful in launching specific apps, such as Street Bump (which collects data on potholes as citizens drive around and transmits this to the city hall) and Citizens Connect (an app that allows citizens to report quality of life issues to the council) which fits in with a wholly transformed CRM system, as well as a range of initiatives surrounding education. The model has now also been embraced by other cities including Philadelphia.

In a recent case study of the organisation, researchers highlighted that due to the centrally located nature of the small team within the mayor's office rather than isolated in a particular department, and to strong buy in and leadership from the mayor who encouraged them to cut through bureaucratic red tape, 'even without substantial budgetary authority or staff resources, the mayor's office of New Urban Mechanics succeeded in cajoling and facilitating useful cross-City Hall efforts as well as collaborations between people inside and outside government. The mayor's imprimatur (and their own personalities) made these staffers fearless'.[78]

This ability to make partnerships and change despite being a team that is small in number was also enabled by the mix of skillsets of the four key staff, which together cover citizen engagement, software development and digital strategy, government expertise; and private sector experience.

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[78] Crawford, S, 'New Case Study: The Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics and the Evolution of CRM in Boston' (7th August 2013) http://scrawford.net/new-case-study-the-mayors-office-of-new-urban-mechanics-and-the-evolution-of-crm-in-boston/; Crawford, S and Walters, D *Citizen-Centered Governance: The Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics and the Evolution of CRM in Boston* (2013) http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2307158, p.3; see http://www.newurbanmechanics.org/

The lack of central accountability for digital technology in many UK councils often means that councils do not have clear strategies for driving the digital agenda forward. Whilst IT strategies might focus on ICT hardware and software, digital strategies will outline what councils will do to harness digital technology more widely. For example it might outline how digital technologies can relate to service integration, and what councils will do to facilitate this by working on digital inclusion, information governance and workforce skills development. Some councils like Manchester have clear digital strategies, but in a recent survey of council organisations only one third (35.5 per cent) had already created a digital strategy to guide developments.[79]

CASE STUDY: NEW YORK DIGITAL ROADMAP

In 2011 New York's Mayor Bloomberg introduced the city's first Digital Roadmap. This followed a period of intense consultation with residents and city stakeholders, and set out a path for the city to be a top-ranked Digital City. It outlined a number of initiatives, based on the indices of Internet Access, Open Government, Citizen Engagement, and Digital Industry Growth. Since its launch the city boast's meeting all of its objectives – including expanding NYC Open Data platform from 350 datasets to over 2,000; re-launching their nyc.gov website and tripling their social media audience; and launching 40 digital learning programmes that served over 1,000,000 New Yorkers – and is being updated for the future.[80]

This lack of central accountability and strategic coordination can also mean that opportunities for joint commissioning are missed and initiatives are duplicated. As two councils stated, in some areas coordination is rare and ad hoc:

"There were lots of 'techy' people who were marching on in work streams, and it looked organised. But when you stood and looked at the overall game plan, we weren't clear enough on that." (Service Redesign Manager, Council)

79 UKAuthority, *Local Digital Today: A report commissioned by the DCLG* (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252345/Local_Digital_Today.pdf, p.5
80 See http://www.nyc.gov/html/digital/html/roadmap/roadmap.shtml

"We recently had services wanting new CRM systems. So I said, 'we are in the process of replacing ours, why are you getting another one? Let's do it together.' Otherwise some services are beavering and writing their own systems as they are reluctant to buy off the shelf, and suddenly you've got this monster created." (Head of Customer Services, Council)

Coordinating investment and activities through a clear point of leadership is vital to ensuring joint commissioning for digital products. This can lead to increased opportunities for aligning investments more smartly when existing legacy contracts do come to end.

Our research explored why this leadership is lacking. We found that in part this can be explained by the perception of risk surrounding digital at the top table. Fear about the consequences of investing in digital was seen as a key barrier, as was past experiences of misplaced investments, which plague senior leaders. They tend to have a lack of confidence in their staff to commission and implement digital solutions that deliver the hoped for savings or outcomes. This creates a cycle whereby future investment is viewed with mistrust by those in control of budgets so is not undertaken. As one council chief executive stated:

"I am more risk averse in relation to IT than in other areas. I am not an expert in this. But there's also a sense of 'which horse should I be backing?' In most experiences with IT projects, we've invested in solutions that don't strip out the staff as is expected and actually generate demand …. I want really good examples and business cases of where it has happened and worked"
(Chief Executive, Council)

As this comment demonstrates, councils feel that digital providers are coming to them with insufficient evidence bases for the impact of their solutions. And they also feel that they are being asked to take too great a role shouldering the risks for new digital products, and more is to be done in changing this status quo through new models. As one senior council digital leader stated:

"At present LAs underwrite risk for the private sector. We procure a service and are stuck with it, and often rewards aren't what we hoped for. So we need a new level where the private sector is in partnership … where they take

risks at the beginning. If they have confidence in their models going forward, then they need to take these on" (Head of Digital, Council)

Chief executives and councillors also feel extremely wary of issues surrounding open data and data security. For example open data is often conceived in terms of Freedom of Information requests about council performance that may negatively affect council reputations. Although most data loss is a result of human rather than technical failures, greater data sharing initiatives are viewed as potential sources of embarrassment for councils. This prevents councils from doing more with regards to open data, for example. As one roundtable respondent commented, *"too often data is couched in negative terms, and rather than focussing on the power of open data it is viewed with ennui owing to risks associated with it".*

There is a perception that senior leadership in councils are wary of rationalising face-to-face services and adopting the new ways of working that digital enables due to fears that channel shift would lead to digital exclusion, or drops in popularity. Misconceptions about the digital capabilities of their constituents and the reality that 'channel shift' does not mean the closure of all more accessible services, and a lack of real understanding about councils' real need to rationalise services, are part of the problem:

"We know we really should only have two to three face-to-face service hubs based on need, not political boundaries. But, although it's illogical, [councillors] won't give them up." (Head of Customer Services, Council)

"It gets to the point where you can't think as officers what more you could do until members have accepted we need to radically change how to do things" (Chief Executive, Council)

"Members are important – they tend to assume people want to talk to staff face-to-face and on the phone..." (Head of Customer Services, Council)

SECTOR WIDE LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

Change on these issues is hindered by a lack of coordinated strategy and leadership across the local government sector. It is right that local places will

have locally relevant needs, and local areas should be formulating their own strategies, and developing 'situated software' based on their own needs and with input from their local communities. It is also important to recognise that 'the strategy should be delivery'[81] and councils should not let a lack of sector wide policy on the issue get in the way of them taking the steps towards implementing digital solutions that are achievable.

But coordination, overarching leadership and some sector-wide strategy is useful for councils to benchmark their progress, inspire change through healthy rivalry and pride, share good practice, and prevent duplication of efforts. Interviewees we spoke to felt that many councils are investing in similar functions such as 'My Account' portals on their websites for example, or holding 'hack days' to stimulate the building of useful apps. But it was remarked that *"lots of people are doing it separately, and there is a risk of a classic reinvention of the wheel"*. Apps and software developed could be made open source, and better communication about apps would mean that these can be scaled up.

Similarly lots of councils are dealing with similar issues in relation to external barriers. Many are navigating, understanding and lobbying about security requirements such as those relating to the Public Sector Network, and information sharing and procurement protocols which govern data sharing, and this is wasteful across the sector. And whilst some councils like Newham and Havering are sharing ICT services and staff and making significant savings by doing so, others are missing out on making investments this way due to little overall coordination of their commissioning.

At present organisations do exist to drive forward change and share good practice in the sector. For example the Smart City Advisory Group which sits under the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the British Standards Institute is driving forward good practice in relation to smart cities; the voluntary LocalGov Digital network is bringing digital leaders together to push forward guidance; and DCLG's Local Digital Campaign is running events such as 'Really Useful Days' in collaboration with the Government Digital Service to share good practice.

81 Bracken, M, 'On Strategy: The Strategy is delivery. Again.' (2013) http://mikebracken.com/blog/the-strategy-is-delivery-again/

Additionally providers such as O2 have initiatives such as the Local Government Digital Fund and Forum which works with senior officers and members from local authorities to gain a deeper insight into Local Government issues and opportunities, and provides seed funding to help develop innovative ideas. There are also regional societies of IT managers; and leadership, research and good practice is provided by SOCITM.

But these numerous initiatives are uncoordinated and piecemeal, and tend to be thematic and at times artificially separated. For example issues dealt with by Smart Cities groups may in fact be important to rural local authorities, who would not be involved in these. Many networks and meetings also tend to involve high level meetings rather than real programmes of work, and do not thrash out the detail that councils really need to drive change and foster greater collaboration and joint working. As one council staff member commented:

"I think it is incredibly difficult for councils. There are networks, for example networks of procurement officers. But they do tend to be thematic. And what you miss is potential of spill over of how one technology can support another area, which is where innovation happens. From a local authority perspective, there are forums like the Core Cities Group, where you can discuss opportunities. But they tend to be high level and to get the detail you need is hard." (Head of Digital, Council)

In addition these groups are insufficiently resourced. Unlike the central Government Digital Service which is a separate government agency with 160 staff, in many smaller councils only one person is responsible for web/digital technology.[82] And the digital leaders who attend and contribute to networks are often doing so from their own spare time.

"There are lots of challenges, and one of those is sheer capacity to support change. We need leadership to lead these conversations and do influencing in a collaborative way, as there is no top down here – there are 400 organisations. For example on the Solutions Advisory Group, we all put money in, human capacity. But we are juggling our resources more and more over

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[82] SOCTIM, 'How Local and Central Digital Strategies inter-relate' http://plantingtheflag.net/node/51

time to do more with less, so part of the challenge is to find new capacity."
(Joint Head of ICT, Council)

Furthermore organisations like SOCITM are subscription only, and the reach of most campaigns tends to be targeted at IT managers and heads of customer services rather than chief executives, councillors and heads of service whose roles are vital and should also be on board the agenda. What is more funders support pilot projects, but these are short lived and councils felt that it was a challenge to translate these into embedded organisation and sector wide change. And at present since there is no real engine room holding councils accountable there is a risk that existing initiatives end up preaching to the converted of councils who are already involved in pushing forward the agenda, and will lead to a greater divide between the 'digitally enabled' and those lagging far behind.

"… We are all in our bubble – there are always change agents in the council, so we need to move the whole sector forward, to bring it together." (Leader, Council)

"Would it be better if local government collectively supported best practice at the core or centre. We get people like NLGN who will poke us to review assumptions but that is not going to give us full best practice – and people like NESTA to give money for pilots [but] who then go off saying 'bye!' Whereas there is the GDS in central government. But in local government we are all struggling in isolation, and we can't retain ex-Google executives like GDS. Rather than all struggling on our own, much of it in our own time, we need something to bring us together." (Web Manager, Council)

3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to drive forward the digital agenda within local government, there is obviously a need to mitigate councils' fears around their ability to smartly commission and implement digital solutions; and to drive forward leadership, both within individual councils and across the sector.

This chapter draws together suggestions from our research participants to form solutions to help councils to do this. We have set out four overarching recommendations which focus on: leadership; culture and skills; community engagement; and cross sector collaboration. This is accompanied by a 'Digital Checklist' bringing together the small, concrete steps that councils can use to help them on their digital journeys.

1 FOSTERING LEADERSHIP

We know that leadership is vital in driving this agenda forward. Council leaders and chief executives need to grasp this agenda and make it central to how their organisations transform for the future. Part of this is about understanding what is possible and what digital can achieve – sharing good practice is vital. But it is also about ensuring that leaders create a culture for innovation, a digital by default approach and also an approach to managing risk that enables councils to learn when things go wrong and celebrate success.

Once senior leaders have grasped the importance of digital, they can create an environment for it to grow by appointing a cabinet member for digital and a named member of staff as a digital champion. Assigning a cabinet member for digital issues can help make responsibility clear so that the agenda is at the forefront of all council plans. Having this governance structure in place can be vital in creating a clear strategy for digital, which will set out priorities for customers, services, staff skills and investment. Added to this, a staff champion should have a mix of service based and technical skills and sit centrally within the council, and be empowered to establish programme boards, work across

the organisation to make sure digital is considered core to all council business, and work with internal and external partners including citizens to innovate with new solutions and take managed risks with technology. Setting up such digital governance structures at an organisation-wide level, will both make digital a priority, but also assign clear responsibility and enable change to be better pushed out across the council with citizen buy in.

2 CHANGING CULTURE AND MANAGING RISK

Changing culture to trust staff to innovate in digital and develop new skills is vital in transforming services. A significant part of this is accepting and managing risk. Whilst some of the risks councillors and senior council leaders face are understandable, others are based on misconceptions about digital technology. Better assisting councillors, for instance, to understand Twitter and Facebook and how these platforms enable democratic engagement and voter contact is vital. Combatting risk is also about proving the case for digital by growing an evidence base locally and councils need to be better at evaluating their digital investments and sharing the actual costs and benefits of new technologies with other councils. Councils should be using insights about user demand and customer journey mapping to set out how digital will address needs, and inform digital solutions which are developed. Once things go digital, ongoing analytics and feedback should be collected and paired with agile and iterative development which will lead to better products.

Staff should also be trusted to innovate and experiment with new technology. Trusting staff by removing 'surfing level' policies which restrict the hours staff can use social media in the office is important for developing the digital capacity of staff. Work should be done from all levels of the council to embed and encourage digital competency and awareness and promote digital skillsets as an important element of all job roles – not just those directly involving IT.

Skills audits can help here, and once those with digital skills are identified, taking a proactive role to embedding digital cultural change might also involve assigning particular digital champions and ambassadors within the organisation to be a digital 'go-tos' on particular issues. Supporting early adopters of digital technology to lead the way and attempt to up-skill others

in a 'coalition of the willing' can be effective in driving change. This will enable much smarter investment in digital products and optimise the use of digital solutions in operation. As with all change programmes, staff should be involved in transformations from early on, and the benefits of change should be communicated constantly. Involving staff in discrete digital products and services can also help change the culture more widely.

In addition to mitigating risks, councillors and officers need to be honest and support each other to take the small leaps of faith that sometimes are necessary for digital innovation. Staff need a mandate and culture where they have permission to experiment on a small scale, and understand that small failures are acceptable, inevitable, and even useful for innovation. Embracing agile development and more flexible contracts can mean that where a service does not meet needs as is expected, action can be taken before losses accumulate.

3 ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY

If implemented properly, digital can fundamentally change the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the state. Ensuring that the community and key service users are brought along with the journey, rather than having digital 'done to them', is key to success. Some of this is about understanding user needs, opening up data and involving citizens in the co-production of service solutions. It's also about ensuring that individuals and communities have access to hardware and connectivity. Part of this means meeting citizens where they are. Increasingly citizens have mobile phones and smartphone access to the internet, and councils can easily improve digital inclusion by making sure that all sites are mobile friendly and not forgetting to utilise SMS services.

Ensuring that citizens have the skills and impetus to use digital is just as important as the hardware. Councils need to enable people to use the technology, and to recognise its value to their lives. This might be by showing people that digital technology can help them keep in contact with family from far afield, or by showing parents how it can support them to help with their children's homework. Where citizens have difficulty grasping digital technology, assisted digital and service-user oriented design can help. Channel Shift does not mean a closure of face-to-face portals for those that

need them, though when designed intuitively and with the customer in mind, digital services do mean that the majority of residents naturally migrate online.

Putting citizens in control of their own data will also give them a huge sense of ownership over the digital agenda. Personal Data Stores are a useful way to overcome data sharing problems and ensure that data below the statutory level is shared by putting the citizen in the driving seat with regards to their own data. If citizens can easily and confidently control who accesses different information about them and for what purpose, citizens are more likely to approve of information about them being shared. Councils should promote these and build the concept into their work, but also by considering the concept of value exchange to incentivise take up - whereby for example citizens access services online if they opt in to a personal data store.

4 A LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL PROGRAMME

There are clear steps that councils can take individually to address the barriers preventing them from making the most of digital technology. However for many areas there is a strong need for sector-wide collaboration.

There are healthy dialogues and a number of groups and campaigns do already exist which are attempting to share good practice and build and maintain momentum. But these numerous initiatives are uncoordinated and piecemeal, and tend to be thematic and at times artificially separated.

We therefore recommend a review of existing local government digital initiatives, which would decide upon the format for an overarching local government digital programme. We know that in the current climate it is difficult to recommend the creation of a new programme needing funding and coordination from various existing bodies, but feel that this is vital if we are to drive change across the sector. The review should therefore comprehensively gather information about existing initiatives and their areas of overlap, and engage all stakeholders to flesh out the format that the local government digital programme should take. We propose that this review should be led by an open and innovative organisation such as LocalGov Digital with the support of DCLG and research organisations.

Whilst the detail of the programme needs to be decided upon by stakeholders, we suggest core elements might include:

BENCHMARK AND ENGAGE THE SECTOR

- Formulate good practice and standards for the sector.
- Benchmark all councils on these key digital capabilities to drive healthy competition.
- Engage with IT and web staff, but also chief executives, councillors and heads of service.

GROW THE EVIDENCE BASE

- Grow the evidence base for innovations through more strategic targeting of pilots and resources for thorough and high quality evaluation of these.

BUILD POLICY DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

- Liaise with central government on behalf of the sector in relation to issues such as central government security requirements, procurement regulations and open standards to combat overt reliance on proprietorial systems.
- Co-ordinate work streams to minimise duplication and establish 'lead' authorities to progress particular issues, such as Information Governance guidance, that could be adopted by others.

CO-ORDINATE AND ENGAGE THE CIVIC TECH COMMUNITY

- Co-ordinate sponsored events and 'hack days' to engage the wider developer and technology community and build momentum for civic technology, but also to minimise duplication and maximise the lasting benefit of these initiatives and the solutions they lead to.

FACILITATE SHARING

- Share detailed information regarding software models, hardware designs, business designs, good practice and open-source coding.
- Provide a forum for small civically minded contractors and developers to reach a wider audience to scale up their digital solutions.
- Enable greater opportunities for joint contracting and shared services through increased networking and transparency regarding activity and contracts.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Attract and retain skilled staff to the sector through a well branded local government digital development programme for new graduates which includes mentoring opportunities for graduates from GDS and the private sector, and a fellowship programme for those wishing to work in the sector on a flexible basis.

DIGITAL CHECKLIST

Alongside these strategic recommendations we also identify a digital checklist which brings together a number of practical steps councils can take to drive the digital agenda forward in their areas.

STAFF SKILLS AND CULTURE CHANGE

- ☑ Build digital skills into all job specifications
- ☑ Support digital champions, wherever they may lie in the organisation
- ☑ Encourage personal usage of social media so as to crossover into professional practice
- ☑ Involve staff and reinforce benefits of digital transformations to service users and a positive vision from the start and from the top
- ☑ Be clear about information governance requirements and take time to create clear data sharing agreements with partners to overcome resistance
- ☑ Communicate the art of the possible with 'hands on' demonstrations and workshops to win over sceptical councillors and staff
- ☑ Make sure Democratic Services show councillors social media engagement as a matter of course, and encourage peer to peer transmission of skills from councillor to councillor
- ☑ Be honest with staff and councillors about the pressing needs to do things differently
- ☑ Use a discrete digital project to change the culture within the council more widely
- ☑ Learn from other councils – you're not alone

DIGITAL INCLUSION

- ☑ Tackle hardware, skills, connectivity and emphasise the benefits of digital to citizens
- ☑ Don't forget the importance of mobile friendly websites and services
- ☑ Remember assisted digital so that residents are not left behind
- ☑ Trust citizens with their own data and take seriously the benefits of personal data stores to overcome citizens' fears about data sharing
- ☑ Pool the resources available for digital inclusion from across local public services

EVALUATION

- ☑ Collect data on the costs and outcomes of digital solutions and make this available to other local authorities

DIGITAL SERVICE DESIGN AND COMMISSIONING

☑ Take time to understand and fully map service user needs and journeys before thinking of technological solutions

☑ Think smart to maximise the value of your contracts and future proof investments

☑ Make sure to safeguard and value data in contracts so that data is still owned by the council or can be easily accessed for free

☑ Procure for innovation by using small contracts and frameworks to build in flexibility and involve innovative SMEs, by negotiating risk-reward models with providers that focus on outcomes

☑ Open up useful data and engage citizens and social entrepreneurs through 'hack days' and challenges to co-produce digitally enabled service solutions

☑ Embrace 'agile' solution development, collecting feedback constantly and working iteratively to adapt solutions over time

☑ Enable joint contracting and commissioning by thinking ahead about contract end dates and by building relationships with public service partners early on

☑ Think creatively about types of collaboration, such as staged contracts, which enable other partners to enter into agreements later on once existing contract dates end

GOVERNANCE

☑ Appoint a cabinet member for digital

☑ Assign a named digital champion within the council who has a mix of technical and service based knowledge to lead on the issue

☑ Empower your digital champion to create a local digital strategy, ensure digital is embedded into all council plans, and establish programme boards on particular issues such as information governance

CONCLUSION

In this era of austerity, with councils facing severe budget cuts and the need to prioritise frontline services, digital technology is increasingly showcased as an exciting way to make significant savings whilst simultaneously improving service satisfaction and outcomes for places. This is for good reason. We have seen how digital technology can enable far more person-centred and integrated care; it can engage citizens in new ways and empower them to work together for their communities; and that digital technologies and businesses can play a crucial role in driving local economic growth and supporting the creation of greener places.

But this report has found that whilst there is much good practice emerging, councils sometimes struggle to fully unlock the benefits of technologies that they do invest in. They are often uncomfortable, and understandably risk averse, moving forward on this agenda.

We have found that many of the reasons hindering progress and undermining confidence in this field are the same sorts of barriers that often surround service transformation in general: skills, organisational culture, and leadership. But by investing in people through a focus on leadership and skills, as well as in the new technologies themselves – and crucially by doing so together – councils can reap the substantial benefits of digital for the good of their places. What is more, by embracing notions of 'agile development' and user oriented design, digital can also be used as a catalyst to bring about positive change in councils more widely.

Whilst it is unrealistic to think that all councils can move forward on all aspects of the digital agenda at once, we do think that in a relatively short timeframe much basic positive change can happen. For example, in the near future councils should all have fully mobile friendly websites with user oriented digital services seamlessly linked to all their operations, and councillors who will be confident and trusted to use Twitter, Tumblr and the social media platforms of the future.

Councils should also be collecting and releasing much more high quality data, engaging civically minded developers and citizens to form apps and useful solutions from this, and working with local public services to better integrate data from multiple sources and engage citizens fully in this process. This is crucial because it is only by these means that public services can hope to overcome the challenges posed by our rapidly ageing population, fully harness community capacity, and shift to much more preventative and person centered models of care.

The challenge for councils is for them to ensure, individually and collectively, that they have the skills, leadership and organisational cultures to bring about this change. Embracing digital is no easy challenge, but it is vital. We hope this report has inspired councils to rise to this challenge, provided them with the tools to help them do so, and opened up the debate about the sector wide collaboration that is needed to drive the agenda forward.

APPENDIX 1: USEFUL RESOURCES

The resources below are a useful starting points to find out more about relevant events, networking opportunities, funding opportunities and good practice that can help you along your digital journey.

UKAUTHORITY, DIGITAL BY DEFAULT NEWS, AND PUBLIC TECHNOLOGY

UKAuthority, Digital by Default News, and Public Technology are news platforms featuring content on technology and the impact it has on local and national public services. They provide news and commentary on a range of issues including contracts and shared services, new technology and barriers and enabling factors. UKAuthority also feature information about DCLG's Local Digital Campaign which they are contracted to run.

www.ukauthority.com
@UKAuthority
www.digitalbydefaultnews.co.uk
@DByDNews
www.publictechnology.net
@PublicTech
#news #goodpractice #localgov

GUARDIAN LOCAL LEADERS

The technology and local government pages of the Public Leaders Guardian Professional Network features news, good practice, online conversations and commentary which often cover digital technology in relevance to local government and public services. These pages are a useful starting point to find accessible information about recent developments and good practice from elsewhere.

www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/technology
www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/local-government
@Guardian_local
#news #goodpractice #leadership

LOCALGOV DIGITAL

LocalGov Digital are a practitioner led network aiming to raise standards in web provision and the use of digital by councils across the country, and to create a flexible digital framework that is able to respond to local needs. They have a core steering group, and 'workstreams' on issues such as Rewiring Local Democracy, Infrastructure and Technology led by practitioners. They have created useful free open source resources for the sector such as a usability dashboard which enables councils to gather feedback from peers and the public on tasks across their websites, and web content standards. These resources and information about physical and virtual events, and information about how to get involved, can be viewed on their websites.

http://sites.idea.gov.uk/localgovdigital/
@LocalGovDigital
#leadership #localgov #goodpractice #opensource #resources #events #networking

LOCAL DIGITAL

Local Digital is DCLG's campaign to foster the development of faster, better, cheaper local digital services. It is contracted to UKAuthority with funding from DCLG and the supplier community. The campaign website has links to events, news channel, and newsletters on topics such as channel shift, customer journey mapping, procurement and service design standards that are free to interested parties.

www.ukauthority.com/LocalDigital
@LocalDigitalGov
@ukalocaldigital
#localgov #goodpractice #news #events #DCLG

SOCITM

The Society for Information Technology Managers (SOCITM) is a professional body founded in 1986 for those involved in the leadership and management of IT and digitally enabled services delivered for public benefit. They run on a membership based structure, with useful information, benchmarking, events and reports available to fee paying members or those willing to purchase their reports.

www.socitm.net
@Socitm
#leadership #localgov #goodpractice #benchmarking #consultancy #IT #resources #events

NESTA

NESTA is a charity aiming to improve innovation. They deliver projects and research to drive innovation, and fund external organizations for this purpose. They take a collaborative and general approach, and are keen to support and pilot relevant specialist projects. They have many projects relevant to digital technology and public services, and have recently launched projects such as Code for Europe, Digital Social Innovation and the Open Data Challenge series. Their website features information about events they run, research publications, and their weekly newsletter and blogs which provide insight into other innovative developments in this field.

www.nesta.org.uk
@nesta_uk
#innovation #charity #pilots #funding #apps #socialbenefit

CODE FOR AMERICA

Code for America (CfA) is a non-profit organisation based in the USA which aims to develop the digital potential in American cities. It works with local governments in the USA and runs four key programmes which together aim to connect citizens and governments to design better government digital services; encourage low risk settings

for innovation; and support a competitive civic technological marketplace. Their website features information about the organisation and their various projects, about apps and solutions developed and events taking place, and a blog and library with useful resources and insight to spread CfA learning and solutions across the globe.

www.codeforamerica.org
@codeforamerica
#opendata #apps #collaboration #civichacking #localgov

UKGOVCAMP AND LOCALGOVCAMP

UKGovCamp is an annual 'unconference' for people interested in digital technology and the public sector. LocalGovCamp is a similar event focussed at local government. Gov Camps gather interested parties at a location, but differ from conferences in that there are no keynotes or sponsored pitches, they are open to anyone, are free to attend, and run to an agenda set by participants themselves and on the principles of Open Space events. The websites below feature information and learning from past events, and information about upcoming Gov Camps and how to get involved.

www.ukgovcamp.com
@UKGovCamp
www.sites.idea.gov.uk/localgovdigital/2014/01/25/localgovcamp-2014
@LocalGovCamp
#events #opendata #apps #publicservices

GDS

The Government Digital Service (GDS) is a unit within the UK cabinet office committed to implementing the government's Digital Strategy and leading the digital transformation of central government. Their website has information about their work, as well as blog posts which include insight and good practice relevant to local councils.

www.gds.blog.gov.uk/category/gds
@gdsteam
#UKgov #goodpractice #digitalpublicservices #web #assisteddigital

GO ON

Go ON are a small charity founded with the support of government and a coalition of businesses which aims to counter the basic digital skills deficit in Britain. Their website features information about the digital skills deficit, current digital inclusion initiatives run in partnership with local authorities and businesses, and information about how to set up a digital skills initiative in your local area.

www.go-on.co.uk
@Go_ON_UK
#digitalinclusion #national #collaborative

PUBLIC i NETWORKED COUNCILLOR

Public i is a provider of technology services to enable webcasting, e-petitioning and consultation, and consultancy support to organisations such as councils. Their Networked Councillor project was an East of England LGA project involved research to articulate the challenges and opportunities that face local politicians operating in an increasingly networked and digital society. The report, and the project website, provides good practice, a forum for councillors to share their views, and support to help councillors embrace digital technologies such as social media.

www.networkedcouncillor.wordpress.com
@public_i
#councillors #socialmedia #participation #resources

ODI

The Open Data Institute (ODI) is a non-profit organisation founded by Tim Berners Lee and supported by funding from the UK Government to spread the use of open data. They convene world-class experts to collaborate, incubate, nurture and mentor new ideas, and promote innovation. They hold events, support start-ups, undertake research, provide open data certificates, run 'open data challenges' to stimulate innovation, and aim to influence policy. Their website has information about courses and learning events they run, and useful guides about issues surrounding open data.
www.theodi.org
@UKODI
#opendata #resources #funding #accreditation #events #leadership

FUTURE CITIES CATAPULT

Future Cities Catapult are one of seven 'Catapults' launched by the UK's Technology Strategy Board. The aim for each of them to become a world-leading innovation centre in its own specialist area. The Future Cities Catapult's specialist area is urban innovation and in particular how cities can take a more integrated joined-up approach to the way they plan and operate. Digital technology is part of this, and smart technology and open data are key features of some of their projects. Their website includes useful information about their current projects and events, and links to the other Technology Strategy Board catapults.

www.futurecities.catapult.org.uk
@futurecitiescat
#opendata #smarttechnology #urbaninnovation #integration #events #projects

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

Open Government Partnership (OGP) was founded in 2011 to provide an international platform to support local campaigners make their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. Since 2011 OGP has expanded to 60 countries including the United States, Argentina, Norway, Kenya, Finland and Ghana. Technology and innovation is considered a core enabler of 'open government'. The below websites provide information on the partnership and about the UK Government's OGP Action Plan 2013, including information about open data.

www.opengovpartnership.org
www.opengovernment.org.uk
@opengovpart
#opendata #opengovernment #strategy

PUBLIC SERVICES LAUNCHPAD

The Public Services Launchpad is an accelerator programme for teams wishing to advance public services through innovation. These teams may involve entrepreneurs, or intrepreneurs – public servants working within their organisations to develop innovative solutions, and many of the solutions developed feature digital technology and open data. It is run by FutureGov and Hub Launchpad, and provides intensive startup support and seed investment for 16 teams on the Public Service Launchpad Accelerator. It also engages a community of over 100 Public Service Launchpad Scholars who support each other to make innovative ideas happen within their organisations or outside of them. The website features information about current teams on the programme, and how to become involved.

http://publicservice.hublaunchpad.net/
@hublaunchpad
#innovation #seedfunding #opendata #apps #publicservices

O2 LOCAL GOVERNMENT DIGITAL FUND AND FORUM

The O2 Local Government Digital Fund and Forum exist to push the uptake of digital technology in local government to find innovative approaches to long term challenges. The Fund is a key initiative from the Forum. It gives local authorities the opportunity to bid for up to £250,000 worth of Telefónica UK services and technology, to help councils benefit from new digital expertise and unlock innovative ways to deliver effective services.

www.o2.co.uk/enterprise/sectors/public-sector/local-government/digital-fund
#innovation #seedfunding #apps #publicservices

FUTUREGOV

FutureGov uses digital technology to improve public services. They work with service users and practitioners to understand their complex needs and create a technological solutions to their challenges. Their website features information about their products such as Lantern, Patchwork and Casserole Club, as well as a blog with useful information and insight based on their experiences working in this area.

www.wearefuturegov.com
@FutureGov
#publicservices #apps #integration #communitycapacity #signposting

APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

API– An Application Programming Interface (API) is a language and message format used by an application to communicate with another application or a computer's operating system. APIs are set of protocols which allow different computer programs to speak to each other.

App – An app is a computer programme (application) designed to run on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablet computers. The simple interface of apps contrasts with traditional applications designed to run on desktop or laptop computers. Apps are exclusively purchased online, normally through central markets such as the Apple App Store or Google Play. Apps are often the most suitable format for providing simple online services. An example of a commercial app might be Facebook for iPhone or Android, or WhatApp messenger.

Application – An application is computer software that is designed to help people perform an activity, e.g. word processing, communication or a game. It contrasts with system software that manages the computer itself, such as Windows. Applications designed to run on desktop or laptop computers may be purchased from a variety of sources, including via retail stores such as iTunes or the Government's G Cloud store, and directly from developers. Applications designed to run on mobile devices are known as apps. Examples of applications include Microsoft Word, Skype and Spotify.

Assisted Digital – Assisted digital refers to the services available for people who are unable to access digital services independently. It refers to the service whereby those who need support can access a service face-to-face, by phone, or in another appropriate non-digital way, with someone either inputting their data into the digital system on their behalf, or helping them put their data into the digital service themselves.

Channel shift – this refers to a significant change in the primary method of delivering services. Generally, this does not apply to services that require significant 'hands-on' attention, such as social care. Clerical, transactional and

routine customer service enquiries are ripe for channel shifts. Channel shift normally refers to a change from expensive methods of service delivery, e.g. face-to-face or telephone service, to cheaper methods, e.g. online self-service.

CRM system – Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a model and suite of technology that organizes and automates and manages contact with customers, including sales, marketing, customer service and technical support. It allows an organization and its employees to share and access information about all interactions with a client, supporting continuity and coherence of communication and progressive development of the relationship. Many councils use CRM systems to manage their contacts with customers, although these do not always cover all departments.

Digital by Default – Digital by Default is the term given to the UK government's policy for making digital public services so straightforward that they are so simple that they are the 'default' or natural option for those able to use digital technology. It embraces the notion of channel shift by making digital the primary means of communicating with the government, and shifting services away from face-to-face methods where it makes sense to do so.

Facebook – Facebook is an online social media application and network that connects users with friends and other acquaintances. It increasingly allows for a degree of interaction with and broadcast by prominent individuals, artists and organisations. Facebook allows for both semi-public and private sharing and publishing of text messages, photos and videos. The platform has over one billion active users, and councils and councillors are beginning to use the application to engage with the public.

GDS –The Government Digital Service (GDS) is a unit within the UK Cabinet Office committed to implementing the Government's Digital Strategy and leading the digital transformation of central government.

Interoperable – Interoperability refers to the ability of computer systems and applications to work together. It encompasses communication between different systems and the ability to share and access data stored and produced on different systems. Interoperability is a critical requirement for the effective sharing of information and the integration of public services.

Online streaming – Online streaming refers to a method of delivering audio-visual programmes that does not need the user to download the entire file or broadcast before listening or watching it. It is similar to a watching or listening to live broadcast of TV or radio, but is over the internet. Streaming and 'live streaming' is used by some councils to allow members of the public to watch or listen to council meetings on the internet after the meeting or as it is happening. Commercial examples of streaming applications include BBC iPlayer and Netflix.

Smart city – The concept of a smart city describes a city that achieves efficiency in governance through investment in and employment of intelligent computer systems and wide public participation. Smart cities generally encourage and invest in a high-skilled workforce and high-technology industries.

SME – Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) are companies whose personnel numbers fall below certain limits.

Social media – Social media refers to online applications and networks that allow individual members of the public to create, share and exchange information directly with one another, in both private and public settings. In this form of media, the public are active producers of content, rather than passive recipients. The content creation model of social media differs fundamentally from traditional media outlets, which rely on the dissemination of information to the public from a limited number of professional sources. Prominent forms of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Twitter – Twitter is a social media application that allows individuals to publish brief text messages, known as "tweets". Tweets may be directed to specific individuals but are usually able to be viewed by the public at large. Twitter allows members of the public to immediately engage well-known individuals, businesses and government agencies, as well as those they know personally. It is often used by firms and government bodies to broadcast important messages, news and advertisements. It is a useful way to find out news and information about specific topics. For example searching '#digital #localgov' will bring up a list of tweets about digital technology relevant to

local government. To benefit from Twitter by 'searching' tweets or 'following' organisations you are interested in, you do not need to write and send out tweets, although this is encouraged.

Wearable tech – Wearable technology is clothes or accessories that incorporating digital technology into their design. Examples of wearable technology include devices such as smart watches or wristbands which monitor and collect data on individuals' physical activity, such as calories burned, distance travelled and what type of activity the wearer was doing, and allows this to be analysed by the user at home.

APPENDIX 3: METHODOLOGY

This report was based on original primary research conducted by NLGN, in addition to a substantial review of secondary literature.

The project was overseen by an advisory group, which met three times and was comprised of the following members:

Raj	Mack	Head of Digital Birmingham	Birmingham City Council
Cllr Jason	Kitcat	Leader	Brighton and Hove City Council
Stephen	Hilton	Director of Connecting Bristol	Bristol City Council
Chris	Brophy	Partner	Capsticks
Carl	Haggerty	Digital Communications Manager /Chair of LocalGov Digital	Devon County Council
Keith	Townsend	Executive Director, Environment & Customer Services	London Borough of Ealing
John	Compton	Service Redesign Manager	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Brigette	Giles	Head of Resource Strategy	
Cllr David	Hopkins	Deputy Leader	Milton Keynes Council
Simon	Parker	Director	NLGN
Mark	Adams-Wright	Managing Partner, Local Government	O2
Norman	Mellor	Head of Client Management, Local Government	
Julieta	Viegas	Public Sector Manager, Enterprise Marketing	
Catherine	Howe	Chief Executive	Public-i
James	Blake	Chief Executive	St Alban's District Council
Amanda	Foley	Head of Human Resources, Customer Services and IT	
Cllr Colin	Noble	Cabinet Member for Finance	Suffolk County Council

The research involved:

■ **Ongoing literature and practice review:** We conducted a thorough literature and practice review to provide context and background knowledge to the report.

- **Roundtable dialogue sessions:** We held four high level roundtable dialogue sessions. Each involved around eight local government participants with a balance of local authority chief executives, councillors and officers/managers and stakeholders from private firms working with local authorities on these issues.

- **In-depth interviews:** We undertook seven in-depth telephone and face-to-face interviews with stakeholders. Interviewees included a mix of representatives from local authorities, and provider stakeholders.

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O2 is a leading digital communications company. We have invested heavily in a dedicated public sector organisation which ensures we can dedicate our resources to even better serve the public sector.

By putting digital services at the heart of every solution, we are helping our public sector customers tackle some of their toughest challenges and deliver great service through technology:

■ Getting closer to citizens and communities, with new insights and digital services.

■ Driving agile working by empowering front line workers with smartphones, tablets and apps that help them deliver better service, more safely and efficiently.

■ Helping local businesses to grow and support the local economy.

■ Supporting sustainability goals by reducing travel costs and optimising the demand for office space.

■ Unravelling the tangle of networks to create a simple, unified infrastructure, that's easier to manage and costs less to run.

We are present on many national and regional frameworks supplying digital products and services across the public sector. Notably we have a prominent presence on the PSN Services Framework and the G-Cloud Framework.

For further information, please visit **www.o2.co.uk/publicsector**

Digital technology provides local authorities with huge opportunities to transform the services that they provide and the way they interact with communities. In a time when councils have to do much more with fewer resources, digital can provide a way to improve outcomes whilst delivering efficiencies.

This report makes the case for digital local government and explores progress in the sector to date. It finds that whilst good practice is emerging, councils are facing barriers which mean that they are still not realising the full benefits of digital technology for their places.

The challenge for councils is for them to ensure, individually and collectively, that they have the skills, leadership and organisational cultures to bring about this change. The intention of this report is to inspire councils to rise to this challenge, lay out steps for them to take, and open up the debate about the sector wide collaboration needed to drive this important agenda forward.

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