

Islington Digital Services – Strategic Context 2023/24

Background

The Islington Digital Services (IDS) review and reorganisation activity of 2023 has targeted the evolution of our service to meet the current demands of our organisation and our community.

Due to the nature of services it provides, IDS is a constantly evolving function and we have seen two distinct generations that highlight this evolution and reinvention.

The first generation was the 'Establishment' generation, where the organisation separated from the Shared Digital arrangement and established its own leadership, processes, operations, and identity.

The second was triggered in March 2020, and became the 'Covid-Response' generation. This generation was characterised by strong empowerment, innovation and a sense of action.

Post pandemic and recovery, there is a new enthusiasm for progressive digitisation initiatives surfacing in the organisation – from process re-engineering to harnessing the possibilities of AI. There is also a willingness to adopt new technologies and approaches which bring opportunities to create a renewed focus on providing the next generation of digital services to residents. It is time to re-evaluate our strategic priorities, reinvent and allocate resources to areas that will transform the resident experience and deliver operational efficiency. A new organisational concept that is proposed is based on the foundations of envision, transform, and operate our digital services.

The change proposals aimed to:

- Build the organisational and people capability to lead digital change programmes across the council.
- To develop a culture of innovation and excellence in digital services.
- To align our digital services approach with the needs and expectations of our residents.
- To create opportunities for staff to develop their skills and advance their careers.
- Create direct operational savings for the Service and council through the reduction of contractors, as well as indirect savings through improved efficiencies and resident satisfaction through the digitalisation and automation of council services.

We are early in applying these changes, and our strategy framework is developing to meet these aims and the objectives of the Islington Together 2030 plan.

Here we offer some excerpts from a Draft Digital Innovation Strategy for the organisation, which is a focus of current engagement and further development.

DRAFT - Embracing Digital Innovation Strategy

Foreword

The Borough of Islington is a vibrant community at the heart of a London. We are surrounded by cutting edge innovators in both the public and private sectors. The pace of change in technology is accelerating, and the behaviour of our residents is adapting to make use of technology in their day-to-day lives.

For Local Government that presents both a challenge to respond, and an opportunity to make use of technology innovations and trends in meeting the needs of our community.

Our digital innovation strategy is to invest in new technologies and practices to modernise our services, enrich our borough, and improve the lives of our residents and community partners.

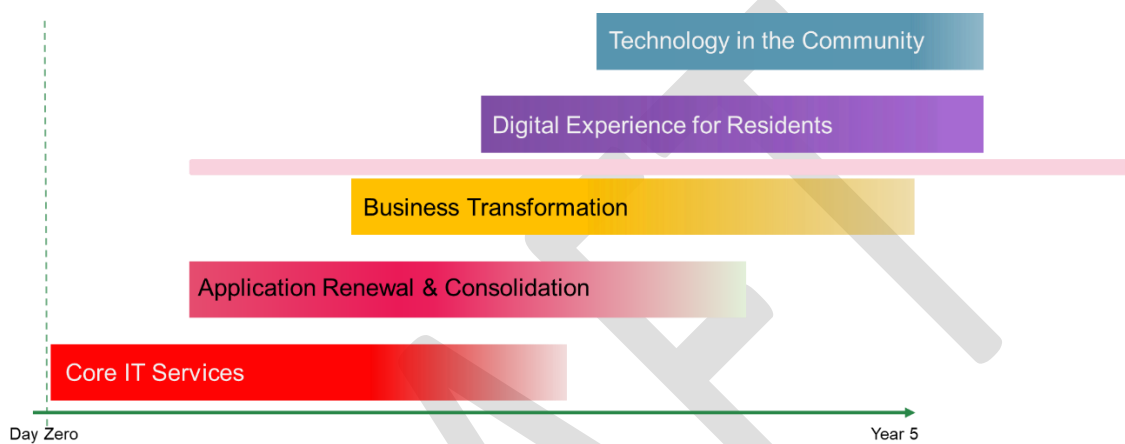
“Digital transformation is no longer a question of ‘if’ but ‘how fast?’ The challenge for every leader today is how to keep up with the pace of digital change.”

~ David Rogers, Columbia Business School

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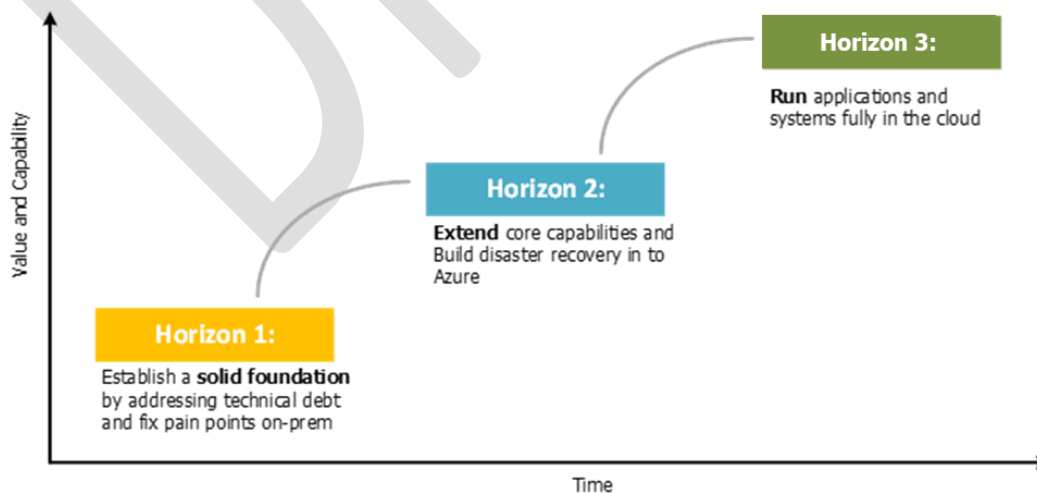
Where are we now?

In 2018-19 the Council exited a shared service arrangement for managing and delivering technology and digital services. At that point the Council's legacy technology was a risk for service resilience and cyber security. We focused on stabilising the foundations of our technology estate and data services to sustain council operations. In 2019 we produced a simple statement of strategic intent to illustrate the need to focus on these foundation areas as we develop our maturity.



2019 Layered IT and Digital Strategy

Since this time, we have matured our IT and operations significantly. We have reached the second Horizon phase of our Technology Roadmap. We now have c70% of our critical applications cloud hosted or as Software as a Service, and we have the seeds of new Digital and Data platform capabilities that can fuel future transformation. See Appendix 2 for more detail on the council's Technology Roadmap.



Phases of our 2020 Technology Roadmap

Prior to 2023 our digital and technology focus has largely been “IT Projects” and business application upgrades. Breaking through the transformation and innovation barrier requires a much bigger collaboration and sense of “whole/multi-organisation” design and execution of our technology solutions to generate innovation and transformative change.

The London Borough of Islington has recognised this need to invest in the transformation of public services both within the organisation and across our community. To this end we have several notable initiatives in progress (as of 2023) that require digital technology or skills as an enabler of this change.

Resident Experience Programme: Reviewing and developing our services to put Residents at the centre of our service and process design. Making the best use of technology to accelerate channel shift from more traditional, and costly, channels such as face to face and telephone, and reviewing the way we are organised to ensure resident outcomes are at the centre of operations.

Digital Experience Programme: Early in 2024 we are introducing the new **My Islington** digital portal. This will make it quicker and easier for our residents to access the services they need online and help create a more equal Islington. This will include an online customer account, online transaction processing, and will eventually replace the existing legacy My eAccount. This is a key enabler as we look to improve the resident experience.

Digital exclusion to inclusion Steering Board: Building partnerships across council services and with external organisations. The group will develop or track activity for supporting our community in accessing the devices, connectivity, skills & confidence needed to make use of digital channels.

Data Platform: A ‘Modern Data Platform’ built in a cloud infrastructure environment. The purpose of the platform is to provide an integrated technology solution that will allow council data, currently stored in line of business applications, to be extracted and delivered to data analysts and consumers through a set of data analysis tools. Initial data sets have been loaded into the platform and we are delivering data dashboards to visualise insights from this information.

Data and Analytics Strategy: We have been awarded grant funding by the National Institute for Health and Care research to develop Health Determinants research collaborations. This is a fantastic endorsement of our approach to developing our data and analytics capability. The council has established a Data Intelligence Team specialising in data analysis and continue to make use of digital tools such as PowerBi to develop skills across the organisation and insights into our priorities. We will be formalising this with a Data and Analytics strategy.

Let’s Talk Islington: We have successfully refreshed and updated the platforms used to engage residents for feedback and surveys. This is in use for both formal consultation campaigns and to gather informal feedback on proposals for future initiatives (e.g., feedback on the new **My Islington** portal design).

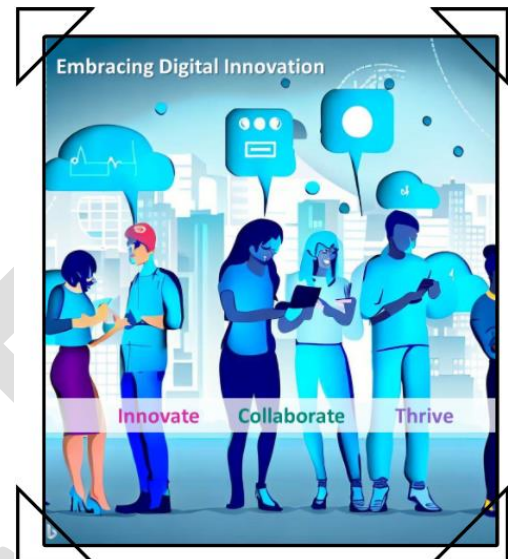
Embracing Digital Innovation Summary

We will innovate and collaborate with partners, and residents to develop a thriving community empowered by digital technologies.

Aligned to the Islington Together 2030 plan, our approach to digital innovation is focused on achieving outcomes for our community. We believe that technology can be a powerful tool for improving people's lives, and we are committed to using it to make a positive difference in Islington.

Our vision for digital innovation is to use technology to:

- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services
- Make it easier for residents to access information and services
- Connect people and communities
- Solve problems and address challenges



Digital innovation offers the power to support our community services through achieve their mission through:

Innovate: We will embrace digital innovation to make our services, information, and support more accessible and seamless for our community. We will explore and adopt emerging technologies to create services that are adaptive and dynamic to the needs of Islington.

Collaborate: We will adopt digital capabilities to collaborate with our partners and support the well-being of our community. We will help those who are vulnerable, enhance the opportunities for our youth, foster dialogue and cooperation among different groups, and share data responsibly.

Thrive: We will harness digital technologies to make Islington a more prosperous, inclusive, and connected community for everyone.

“Lesson #7: Bridging the business-technology chasm is critical to outperformance”

McKinsey ~ Seven key lessons on technology and business

Digital transformation is not a destination. Instead, our approach centres on the practices and capabilities that will target our effort to deliver outcomes for our community. Be it; ease of access to efficient and responsive services; or in building platforms that connect our community to support or opportunities; or championing initiatives to create a connected community.^{1 2}

This document describes our approach to embracing digital innovation as we seek to deliver on our Islington Together 2030 Plan. In this endeavour we recognise 8 common actions that would help the council move beyond pockets of Digital Innovation and embed digitised services in how we meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors to the borough.

Digital leadership and capability - 8

We will develop the digital leadership and capability of organisation to enable effective digital services, and to champion digital innovation across the borough.

Emerging technologies - 7

We will look to technology trends to inspire changes in how we deliver services, working with the wider public services community, we will test their value through pilots and prototypes.

Secure, resilient & sustainable technology - 6

We will ensure that our technology systems and services are maintained and progress with technology advancement.

Better data to power decision making - 5

We will use data effectively and efficiently to inform our policies, strategies and operations, and to improve outcomes for our community.



1 - Adoption of digital channels

We will design a compelling digitized services that are simple, clear, fast and responsive. We will make use of digital platforms to communicate and engage with our community.

2 - Digitally included community

We will work with others to create a digitally included community. We will champion work to overcome barriers such as access to devices, skills or connectivity

3 - User-centred design

We will deploy user-centred design methods to understand the needs of our service users and develop accessible, convenient and personalised digital services.

4 - One central login for our services

We will provide a single, secure and easy way for our residents and businesses to access and manage their online interactions with the council and other public services

We will bring together residents, technical expertise, and the subject matter expertise of our services and partners to co-design Digital Roadmaps across our services, and develop solutions targeted at their priorities. This will entail adopting the practices, standards and technology capabilities of the digital era.

¹ [McKinsey | Seven key lessons on technology and business \(mckinsey.com\)](https://www.mckinsey.com)

² [Nesta | A Brief Introduction to Digital Transformation \(nesta.org.uk\)](https://www.nesta.org.uk)



Practices and skills such as:

User entered design

Design thinking

Open data

Data analytics

Adaptive services

Prototype and pilot emerging technologies

Government digital service standards

Technology platforms:

Customer experience systems

Service delivery systems

Data and Analytics systems (and automation)

Partner platforms (and data integration)

Internet of things

The London Borough of Islington has already recognised the need for a new approach to improve and transform our services with a number of existing projects. By defining our commitment and areas of focus we ensure this is a standard we aspire to across our organisation. We harness the potential of technology advancements and digital innovation practices in how we work to deliver the Islington Together 2030 Plan and epitomise the shifts needed in our organisation to achieve our ambitions

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Investing in our technology

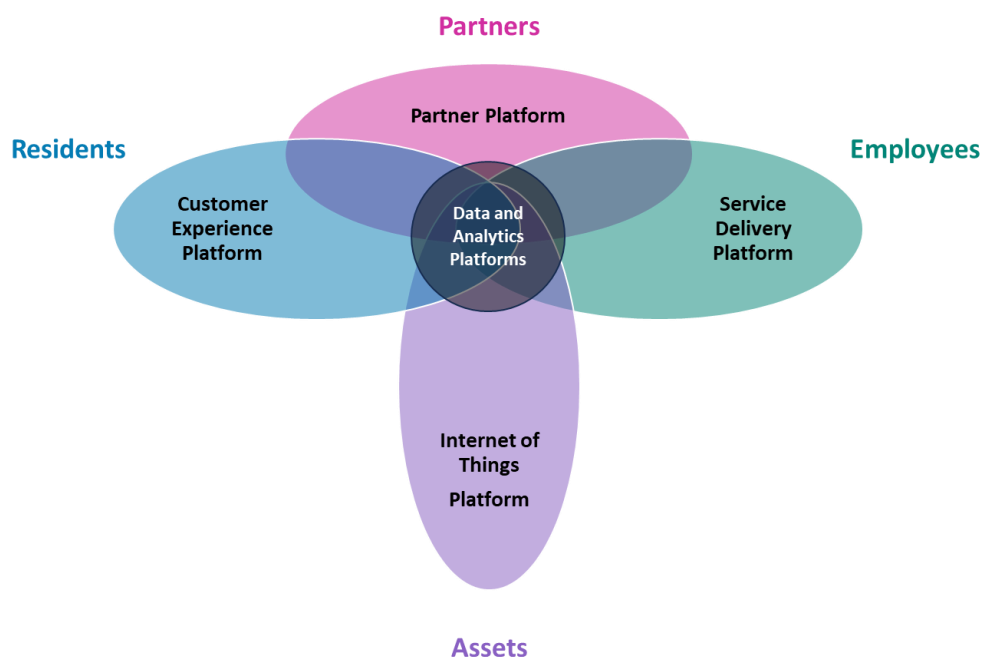
Digital innovation opportunities will surface through thoughtful, informed and inspired designs for current or future public services. The inspiration is a product of the pace of change in available technologies.

Gartner described the Digital Business Technology platform in 2017, and we can still look for innovation and improvement in these areas of technology to spark and enable digital transformation across the organisation.

“IT becomes the way to translate this stuff from being magic to being something that is actually attainable.”

~ Jim MacLennan - CIO IDEX Corporation

[Gartner | Don't Think So Much: The Key to Digital Transformation](#)



Adapted from, “Building a Digital Business Technology Platform” (Gartner, 2017)

- **Service Delivery Platform** — These are the information management systems that support the back office and operations of the council. The critical line of business or enterprise systems.
- **Customer Experience Platform** — Contains the main customer-facing elements, such as customer and resident portals, multichannel engagement and customer apps.



- **Data and analytics platform** — Contains information management and analytical capabilities. Data management programs and analytical applications fuel data-driven decision making, and crucially the **Automation** of processes.
- **Internet of Things (IoT) platform** — Connects physical assets for monitoring, optimisation and control. Capabilities include connectivity, analytics and integration to other systems.
- **Partner platform** — Supports the creation of “marketplace” platforms, and connection to other external parties/communities. API management, control and security are critical elements.

We already know that many of our Service Delivery Systems are not built to modern digital standards. They are not architected, hosted or developed in a manner consistent with cloud-era technologies. To provide seamless services, we must focus on architecting these technologies to work together. We must continuously review; Does the Council have the necessary technology components required to support the capabilities and new business models of digital business?

Where systems cannot meet our standards, we will review alternatives when the opportunity arises. We know that market competition is limited in some sectors of our business systems. For those areas it is vitally important that we invest in the Data (and Automation), Customer Experience and Partner technologies that will support services to develop and a compelling digital offer for residents.