

Blaenau Gwent Council Digital Transformation Strategy

2023 - 2027



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Foreword

‘The way that we work and live our lives today is constantly changing and will continue to do so into the future.’

We live in a digital age, where the use of digital technologies is having a big impact on the way we connect with our families, friends, and the outside world. The way we receive information and access services has changed significantly.

The range of digital options available presents us with exciting opportunities to change the way we do things. From using mobile phones and smart devices to help us book appointments and order goods online, to the growing capabilities that artificial intelligence can give us.

Our priorities will enable us to improve our customers’ experience. This will mean involvement in ambitious projects to ensure those who are able to use the internet can access information and services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We will be working hard to ensure Blaenau Gwent is a place where people can connect, communicate and access the services they need quickly and efficiently.

Through collaboration with our partners, we will support the more vulnerable in our community to use digital tools and technologies that can help them be independent, stay safe, keep well and be able to get the help they need easily. Equal access is very important to us and for customers unable to access services via digital technologies, the traditional channels will continue to be provided for as long as they are needed.

Stephen Thomas - Leader

Helen Cunningham - Deputy Leader

Introduction

Where we are now

Blaenau Gwent has been progressing with its digital transformation journey over the last few years, with the introduction of new ways of working, modern technology and cloud-based software.

What we are trying to achieve

The scope of this strategy sets out our ambition to make digital transformation an integral part of our approach to providing high quality services.

Our aim is to be proactive, embracing opportunities for national, regional, partnership and local collaboration to better meet the needs of the community.

People already interact digitally with shops, banks and schools and request many services online. Modern customers expect to do the same with their local Council.

The demands and expectations of customers and staff and the speed of digital innovation means that we need to be able to deal with the rising volume of customers' requests, who want faster, more comprehensive services across a growing range of channels.

We work with customers who find themselves digitally excluded and learn from their experiences to better support them.



The digital picture for ...

... the UK

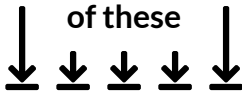
23%

of the UK population



(12.6 million people)

lack basic digital skills



of these

49%

are disabled

60%

have no formal qualifications

63%

are over 75

90%

of jobs nationally **require digital skills** to some degree

... Wales

58%

of adults in Wales access the internet



Internet users in Wales spent an average of

21 hours online per week

Blaenau Gwent



of households do not have internet access



93.5%

of households with internet access **have superfast broadband**

Blaenau Gwent Context

This strategy will support the Council's Vision of being 'a place that is fair, open and welcoming to all by working with and for our communities'.

It will help to deliver the Council's Corporate Plan Priorities:

Maximise learning and skills for all to create a prosperous, thriving, resilient Blaenau Gwent

Respond to the nature and climate crisis and enable connected communities

An ambitious and innovative Council delivering quality services at the right time and in the right place

Empowering and supporting communities to be safe, independent and resilient

The strategy is aligned to the ambitions of the following key plans and strategies:

- > Customer Strategy (in Draft)
- > Workforce Strategy
- > Education ICT Strategy
- > Regeneration Strategy
- > Medium Term Financial Strategy
- > Commissioning and Procurement Strategy
- > Commercial Strategy

This strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment and investment into becoming a customer focussed organisation by:

- > supporting learning and developing skills
- > providing equal access to services
- > identifying and developing the right technology in the right way
- > improving collaboration with others

The key themes and priorities this strategy have been developed through user research and engagement with customers, staff engagement, senior management workshops, elected member engagement, discussions with local authority partners and results of digital maturity assessments.

Wales Context

The strategy will contribute towards the requirements and standards set out in the following:

- > **Well-being and Future Generations Act**
- > **Digital Strategy for Wales**
- > **Digital Service Standards for Wales**
- > **Welsh Language Act**

Whilst delivering this Strategy, we will ensure the decisions we make consider the well-being goals and five ways of working:

Long Term, Integration, Involvement, Collaboration and Prevention.

We will ensure that our decisions are evidenced-based and consider the social and economic impact on our communities.

The key principles and priorities of this strategy are aimed at those who need and want to access the Council. The intention is to build good quality services with those who use and provide them. The additional benefits of using digital technology and innovation will support independence and better-connected communities.

Through our customer-centred design approach we will consider each element of a process and how customers use our services. Having the right culture and leadership to drive our digital ambition will support the development of customer-centred services.

Improved use of data, better engagement and collaboration will allow us to join up services to remove barriers between organisations so that customers can easily access what they need.

Our Principles

The Strategy is underpinned by two key principles and three priorities which are essential to improving and delivering our services in the future:

Principle One

Develop a culture that supports digital improvement and a seamless customer experience.

Aim: To ensure we have a shared understanding of what digital means for our organisation, customers, businesses and learners.

We will do this by:

- > developing a shared vision on how the Council will improve and deliver its services
- > influencing behaviours that put the customer at the heart of everything we do
- > developing a customer-centric approach to delivering services
- > working as one organisation to remove silos
- > developing a data driven culture to improve and design services
- > developing an innovating and intrapreneurial culture to modernise the organisation
- > collaborating with partners and organisations to design digital services that can be used for the whole of Wales
- > developing an open culture where information is shared and reused whilst ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place

Principle Two

Improve collaboration to make the best use of knowledge and expertise to create better services.

Aim: To improve how we engage with customers, businesses, learners and partners to provide an opportunity to build services that are fit for the 21st Century.

We will do this by:

- > working with communities to design digital services to solve complex problems
- > working with all stakeholders to understand issues with service delivery
- > working with partners to align projects and contracts to make the best use of resources
- > building and developing multi-disciplinary teams to improve skills and draw on expertise
- > becoming more efficient when delivering projects with shared knowledge, ownership and understanding
- > improving communication and sharing of information across the organisation and with stakeholders

Our Priorities

Priority One - To be a customer focussed organisation

Aim: Design services based on what our customers and businesses need by taking a customer-centred approach

We will achieve this by:

- > designing digital services that are so good that people prefer to use them
- > ensuring our services are fully accessible and meet all required local and national standards
- > making it easier to find and understand information online
- > making it easier to contact and transact with us
- > making it easier to manage services on behalf of friends and family
- > increasing the number of services available for customers and businesses online
- > ensuring that customers and businesses only share information with us once
- > continuing to review and redesign our processes to make us efficient and effective



Priority Two - To be a digitally enabled Borough

Aim: To develop digital and data skills to deliver services that meet customer and business needs.

We will achieve this by:

- > putting customers and businesses at the heart of everything we do
- > building the right skills that are necessary to deliver customer-centred services
- > develop staff so they are confident in their digital skills to future-proof them and the organisation for the 21st century
- > ensure all elected members and senior managers are digital leaders and support customer-centred approaches
- > ensuring we can adapt quickly to the changing needs and demands of customers and service requirements
- > improving the quality of our data to provide better services
- > making decisions based on evidence
- > using data and insights to become proactive rather than reactive
- > ensuring that all data is protected appropriately
- > sharing data when it is safe and appropriate to do so
- > exploring the use of Open Data to help solve complex problems



Priority Three - To maximise the use of our resources and technology

Aim: To ensure our technology and digital infrastructure is responsive, secure and adaptive to meet the changing needs of our customers, businesses and staff.

We will achieve this by:

- > recruiting and retaining the right people with the right skills for the 21st century
- > ensuring staff have the right tools to deliver efficient and effective services
- > enabling staff to securely work with any device from anywhere (subject to policy)
- > working with communities and businesses to ensure we have the right technology to meet their needs
- > having reliable, secure technology that is cost effective and minimises our carbon footprint
- > developing our digital infrastructure to support the delivery of 21st century services
- > understanding the need for digital products in the Council
- > identifying new technologies and innovations to improve services and how we work
- > collaborating and sharing digital products and technology internally and with partners
- > maintaining our systems so they are always safe and secure
- > automating routine tasks so that our staff can focus on value added work



Monitoring and Review

The Service Design and Digital Leadership Board will oversee the delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy.

Each year the strategy will have a set of Delivery Plans developed against each priority.

A set of key success measures will also be developed.

The strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure we keep pace with ongoing changes to digital innovation, technologies and customer expectation.

This strategy is one of a set of strategic digital/ICT programmes designed to secure the future sustainability across the community and deliver improved outcomes for our customers, businesses and learners.



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