LOCAL DIGITAL LEADERSHIP:

A joint position paper from the LGA, SOLACE, SOCITM and the Local CIO Council

PURPOSE

As the key relevant bodies representing the sector, our joint mission is to engage, inspire and educate senior leaders in local government around the potentials of digital innovation.

CONTEXT

The world that everyday citizens inhabit is changing rapidly. Nowadays, a majority of people rely on the internet to engage in everyday interactions and transactions; and more and more of this is done by smartphone. We socialise, shop, study online. We meet our partners online. Many of us order our groceries online, and then complain on Twitter if the service has not been up to scratch. A touch of a few buttons on your phone, tablet or computer can tell you where to get the cheapest holiday, find you someone's empty apartment to stay in when you get there, advise what the weather will be like, and even tell you when your next bus leaves to get you to the airport (having already checked into your flight on your phone).

Many of us now use apps and devices to monitor our own fitness and health, or to manage our finances. The possibilities of what we can do online continue to expand rapidly day by day, with artificial intelligence and self-learning technologies poised to radically change the way that people and organisations interact.

The landscape for local government is changing too. With the shifting nature of local government funding and the challenge of self-sufficiency looming, local leaders have to find new and innovative ways to ensure the sustainability of local services for the future, as meanwhile pressure on services continues to increase.

There has been a growing recognition across the sector that it will not be possible to simply continue to 'salami slice' existing services. Instead, there needs to be a wholesale rethink about what services can be delivered into the future, who for, and how.

Through the twin agendas of 'devolution' and 'integration', the hope is that this will lead to whole system transformation; with new service delivery models, new ways of working, and new collaborative, strategic partnerships and alliances. A **recent survey of Solace members** found clear support for this view. There was broad agreement that in the long term, public services should move away from the current statutory, silo-driven delivery and that instead there should be the freedom to shape them in the formation best able to effectively deliver outcomes for people and place.

This transformation will not be possible without digital innovation, and local leaders of place have a vital role in ensuring this is not only recognised but also championed.

THE POTENTIALS OF DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Your council

Given the way that most people now use digital technology in their everyday lives, it is perhaps no surprise that they also expect to be able to interact with their council in the same way. Many councils across the UK have now taken steps to respond to this by making their websites more accessible and shifting key transactions online. From reporting incidents such as missed bins or fly-tipping, to managing Council Tax payments and other charges, or bidding for a new council property, many key transactions now take place online.

The benefits of these shifts are multiple: not only do they save the council staff time and money, they also provide easily derived pools of data about the type and volume of issues about which residents are concerned that, when addressed, will lead to a more responsive council. Importantly, they also provide smoother user experiences and measures of user satisfaction tend to confirm this.

CASE STUDY

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham developed an integrated, secure, online customer self-service portal, with a single sign-on for five high-usage services: council tax, benefits, resident and business permits, visitor permits and environmental reporting. An additional eight council services, and mobile and interactive voice recognition access, were included in the second phase. The portal has achieved £1.15 million net savings per annum, with 70 per cent of parking permit renewals completed online and 70 per cent of all households registered.

It is not just about simple interactions between resident and council. Digital technology can also help improve efficiency and performance across the whole council and beyond, to encompass partner agencies, community groups and other stakeholders. Work between staff, between departments or projects and between partner organisations can all benefit from the possibilities of digital innovation.

It could be the social work team being able to manage records online, updating them in real time as they work away from the office, and being able to share records seamlessly where appropriate with relevant colleagues. It could be a relative co-designing and co-delivering a package of care for an aging parent from a range of organisations. It could be councillors able to log and manage casework easily and remotely, linking up with different council departments and services and respond quickly to residents' concerns.

CASE STUDY

Bristol City Council used mobile technology to increase the efficiency of its mobile neighbourhood based staff, reducing office-based hours and increasing reporting of local issues. Sixty mobile officers were identified to receive iPhone and Android tablet devices, pre-loaded with Looking Local's MyCouncil app and a range of other standard software solutions enabling each officer to complete

their daily tasks without having to visit an office. The staff had their roles modified to include mobile reporting of local issues such as fly tipping, and were provided with a short training session on their device and the app. Office hours were reduced for a quarter of the staff, part of a larger programme of facilities reduction which is due to save the council an estimated £10 million over three years. At the same time, local champions were identified by neighbourhood-based staff, and training was given to these champions to enhance digital take-up in the community. This contributed to an increase in targeted online transactions of 22,000 over the same time period – an estimated saving of £91,700 compared to telephone reporting.

CASE STUDY

Staffordshire County Council is using the Patchwork tool, which allows front line staff to log in quickly and see which other agencies are supporting their client. It is not a case management tool, but is designed to mimic familiar social media sites and reduce the risks of different services working in disconnected ways on behalf of the same client. In theory, disparate professionals from various public and voluntary and community sector agencies supporting vulnerable families not only know of each other's shared involvement in the case, but also how best to get hold of each other. But the reality can be very different. Using Patchwork, staff in Staffordshire County Council can immediately discover which other professionals are supporting the same client, and find out how to get in touch with them. There are 64 agencies signed up to Patchwork and 350 professionals supporting almost 2,350 clients in Staffordshire.

Transformation

Whether combining authorities, working to integrate health and social care, tackling troubled families, or engaging with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) on growth and infrastructure, partnership working is increasingly a crucial function of the local authority. Digital technology is a key component in making this possible. Underpinning everything is the ability to share information between partners in a timely fashion.

Successful devolution and public service transformation will require organisations to be able to seamlessly share information about their common users across a range of service areas more effectively, to analyse citizens' needs across a whole place, to target services better, to work more collaboratively rather than in silos, and to reduce the duplication that is costly for both public services and their users.

In particular, it will be crucial for central government to be able to share information with local partners, as services are increasingly devolved, and where collaboration can unlock savings through greater efficiency. Likewise, it is vital for local areas to be able to combine data in real time with the NHS and other health colleagues to aid integration.

CASE STUDY

The Leeds Care Record is an integrated digital care record across health and social care partners in Leeds designed to provide a single view of patient records. It is a partnership project and includes information from primary, acute, community and social care, providing professionals with a single

patient view across multiple systems. Every GP Practice in the city has use of the Leeds Care Record. It is based on design principles of having common standards across health and social care informatics and built around the use of the NHS Number as a primary identifier in social care records. The record is facilitating more joined-up care and reducing the need for duplicate tests and inefficient paperwork.

Councils are now spending more time thinking about how to manage demand. Digital technology can play an important role here too. Using health and social care as an example, analysis of data from often disparate sources can help target services, and online resources can be used to good effect in promoting self care, such as by providing an information resources or facilitating networking opportunities for mutual support. Further, monitoring devices can now be used to track continually individuals' fitness and health, providing early warning for anything from dropping blood sugar levels to instability likely to precede a trip or fall. This allows professionals to intervene early, before needs become more acute and before further demands are made on shrinking public service resources.

CASE STUDY

Cheshire East Council, working with Age UK Cheshire, Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT and Opportunity Links, has developed an online social media and information site (DemenShare) for people living with dementia, from those diagnosed to their families and carers. The site offers 24-hour access to information and enables users to share resources and build networks of support. As well as offering peer support, better outcomes and a reduction in the need for hospital-based services, the site has provided local GPs and commissioners with better insight into and connection with their customers.

Whole places

For many of us, our smartphone knows where we live, how we move around our town or city, what we like to buy, what we search for on the internet and who we know. This is all useful data, ripe with potential insight. Applied to the local governance of whole places, the potential for analysis of data is huge.

There is a growing interest in the role of data analytics, particularly how this can be used to forecast demand or need and thus effectively plan services. This could include 'smart bins' in city centres which track how full they are and send data back to the council allowing them to map the most used areas and plan the service maintenance required accordingly. It could be collecting data on the kinds of journeys that residents and visitors tend to take, allowing for more effective planning of everything from public transport to public spaces. It could be identifying buildings with a high fire-risk. It could be large scale public health maps, understanding hotspots for particular pressures, such as childhood obesity or mental ill health. It could be using fire service and other data to identify people at risk of isolation. It could be extending what is possible in terms of forecasting birth and population data to plan more effectively for school places.

A place-based approach to delivering outcomes, not services, provides the opportunity to deconstruct siloed, paper-based processed and locked-in, disjointed technologies, and to co-design and reconstruct these with users in a simplified and shareable way.

The Trafford Innovation and Intelligence Lab is a multi-organisation, multi-discipline data lab, bringing together data and data/information specialists from the various organisations that work in Trafford, to work on particular problems that they think data can help with. Combining datasets and co-locating people have meant a better understanding of the needs and opportunities in Trafford. Alongside a big commitment to 'open data', the partnership has identified four priority areas for work – mental health, the aging population, unhealthy weight and worklessness – with projects focused around reducing demand for services, helping to redesign them, improving awareness and/or helping to attract investment to the area. Outcomes so far have included analysis of cervical cancer using council, public health, housing association and GP data to identify and tackle low screening take up; identifying priority sites for defibrillators; and mapping of the local area, from faith groups to the availability of publicly accessible IT facilities.

Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council use geographical data to optimise the routes for refuse collection and street cleaning services. This resulted in a saving of £300,000 annually as well as service that was far more effective and responsive to users. Geographic mapping technology is used to analyse and assess property and to plan routes to enable more efficient collection service. All local authorities are licensed to use Ordnance Survey mapping data, and have the capability to analyse and plan routes using other data sets such as the Local Land and Property Gazetteer, demographic information and other information available from service departments.

Aren't there risks?

Of course there are risks associated with the digital world. Many will already have seen the effect that opening up to social media has on the way people register complaints about the council or how particular issues can seem to get blown up out of all proportion. Likewise, there are fears about data protection, particularly where records are shared between different partners. However, there have always been risks involved with councils holding a wide range of personal information about residents, but a well-managed digital system can be more secure and less open to human error.

Further, many are rightly concerned about cyber security and the threat from large-scale hacks. The sector is ahead of this and work is already well underway to ensure that cyber security is embedded across all practice as a matter of course. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recently **published advice for councils** alongside a broader programme of engagement with local government (including Solace, the LGA and Socitm). Further support and advice is available around cyber security including through the UK National Computer Emergency Response Team, **CERT-UK,** and councils can

also join the **Cyber-security Information Sharing Partnership (CiSP)**, which is freely available to all public sector organisations and industry. This enables those who have signed up to receive alerts of cyber threats and to share information, advice and experiences – an important method of defence against cyber threats.

CASE STUDY

The City of London have integrated cyber security into their planning considerations for business resilience in the Square Mile, alongside risks like fire and terrorist threats, highlighting potential risks to be aware of and sharing best practice in protective measures between businesses.

Another concern often raised around digital innovation is that it risks excluding those citizens unable to get online or to access technology readily. However, most authorities have already engaged in work around 'digital inclusion', recognising that with everything from benefits to banking shifting online, getting residents connected will be vital. Additionally, a citizen does not need to be a smartphone user or regular Tweeter to see the benefits delivered through a whole place based approach based on outcomes, as described above. More effective, efficient, responsive and well-designed local services benefit everyone.

CASE STUDY

The London Borough of Lambeth is delivering an innovative new IT peer support project to help local residents get online. Known as "Digi-buddies", the scheme recruits volunteers with strong IT skills to support residents with online activities such as setting up email accounts, applying for jobs, using social networking sites, and buying goods and services.

OUR MISSION

Councils across the UK are at different stages on their digital journey, but there is much to be learned through sharing best practice, capabilities and ideas from others in the sector and outside. As the key, relevant representative bodies for the sector, we have an important role to play in ensuring this happens.

Furthermore, it is senior local leaders who will lead the transformation of our sector. We want to engage, inform and inspire them about the potential of digital technology. Digital innovation is a key pillar of the transformation the sector is currently undergoing. The ability to build shared services and deliver whole place-based policy depends on it. Above all, moving with the digital world ensures the best possible experience and outcomes for local citizens.

We want to challenge local leaders to:

- To champion digital innovation in their own authority by acting as role model in the use of technology, making resources available, and finding space for innovation;

- To champion digital innovation across the sector, by sharing and promoting their own organisation's best practice, as well as being open to learning from others and seeing potentials for collaboration;
- To share and collaborate not just across local government, but with central government, the NHS and other bodies too.

We are committed to working together and will be collaborating on a range of practical 'next steps', including events, training, and working to promote great examples of local digital innovation.

FURTHER READING

- Ahead of the 2015 Spending Review, the LGA were the lead partner in compiling a suite of materials under the heading **'Transforming public services using digital tools'** which make a high-level case for investing in a coordinated and comprehensive programme of support which would enable local government to maximise the customer benefits and cost savings that can be generated from exploiting the potential of modern digital tools, technologies and approaches in local public services. The documents cover a range of excellent case studies.
- A recent report from Nesta, titled **'Connected Councils'**, examines how digital technologies could help councils save money, foster local economic growth and deliver better outcomes for local residents and communities. It sets out a vision of where councils might be in 2025 to better understand what opportunities they face now.
- Socitm have a range of resources including **policy briefings**, **self-assessment tools** and **insights.** Those interested in digital service design and principles can look to Socitm's **Better Connected** project, which has been assessing local authorities' online performance since 1999. Today it evaluates a wide range of digital performance by local public service providers covering websites social media and customer portals as well as take-up satisfaction and management.
- The Local Digital Coalition was established in March 2016 to take over the resources created by the DCLG Local Digital Programme and to enable the many organisations involved in local public service transformation to collaborate on their digital transformation initiatives. The initial action plan for the Coalition, along with its principles for design, can be found **here**.