

## **Supporting digital and service transformation in local government**

### **Purpose of report**

For support and direction.

### **Summary**

Councils need to deliver efficiencies, make savings and reduce demand. This can be partly achieved through the service redesign and taking advantage of the emerging government digital landscape and connecting with the single domain, GOV.UK. This paper sets out how the LGA can help councils prepare, through joining up web and communications teams with service delivery areas, to meet the digital transformation challenges at a practical level.

As part of its digital strategy, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has referenced a new local government 'Digital Programme' to develop with partners, including the LGA. This programme will be launched at the LGA on 4 March 2013.

The LGA is facilitating a network of practitioners called LocalGov Digital, which will seek to help shape and disseminate the principles of this programme through the sharing of good practice, standards and development across local government.

The LGA also supports the Local Government Delivery Council, a group of council Chief Executives involved in transforming local public services, who have feedback their views to DCLG and Cabinet Office on the wider Government Digital Strategy and how central and local government need to collaborate to deliver more joined up public services.

### **Recommendations**

1. Provide member endorsement of the '**LocalGov Digital**' network of practitioners, facilitated at Steering Group level by the LGA, as a sector-led improvement initiative.
2. Support the development of the '**Digital Programme**' that seeks to join up council web teams and service delivery areas through the sharing of knowledge and experience across councils, central government and suppliers.
3. Chair and participate in the '**Digital Summit**' at the LGA on 4 March 2013 (Brandon Lewis MP will be in attendance to jointly launch the Digital Programme).

### **Action**

Members to agree the recommendations set out in this paper and help raise the profile of digital service transformation at senior officer and member levels across all councils.

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## Supporting digital and service transformation in local government

### Background

#### LocalGov Digital Network

1. Earlier this year, the LGA was approached by a group of innovative council web managers, seeking national-level support to help in their quest to ensure all councils are prepared to meet the challenges of channel shift and service transformation.
2. This group set up the 'LocalGov Digital' network, meeting virtually as a small core of individuals on the Knowledge Hub and at two face-to-face meetings at the LGA offices in London to agree the remit of the group. The **terms of reference** for the network is included in **Appendix A**.
3. The overarching purpose of the network is to raise standards in the use of digital by councils across the country. It intends to do this by:
4.
  - 4.1. sharing learning and knowledge across the sector;
  - 4.2. creating a flexible digital framework where aspects (eg. design, code, apps etc) can be re-used and customised as required by different councils; and
  - 4.3. working with members, senior officers and service delivery areas to ensure that councils can continue to deliver services that are efficient, productive and serve local needs.
5. The network is set to grow in size and will be represented at national level by an **LGA facilitated Steering Group** whose membership will cover all regions, council types and the core digital and innovation specialisms.
6. In addition to senior LGA officer support, the Local Government Delivery Council (LGDC) recognises the important role of the network. LGDC is also well placed to provide a strategic steer at Chief Executive level and ensure better connections are made between digital and service delivery areas to support transformation.

#### DCLG Digital strategy and the Digital Programme

7. Following the publication of the 'Government Digital Strategy' and the launch of GOV.UK in November 2012, each government department was set the task of articulating its own digital strategy. With input from the LGA, DCLG published its strategy in December 2012.

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8. The LGA's position which was developed with input from the sector (detailed below) focused firmly on local government digital service transformation being both sector-led and taking into account locality.
9. Although clearly a DCLG owned paper, the LGA's comments were incorporated and, amongst other initiatives, the creation of a '**Digital Programme**' was outlined for development in partnership with:
  - 9.1. **Central government:** DCLG, Government Digital Service (GDS).
  - 9.2. **Local Government:** LGA, LGDC, Local Government CIO Council, LocalGov Digital, Camden Digital Partnership.
  - 9.3. **Suppliers:** Socitm.
10. Feedback cited in the strategy from councils to date on the digital challenges facing councils focus around:
  - 10.1. Leadership of transformational change by councillors and senior officers;
  - 10.2. service officers seeing the potential of digital transformation;
  - 10.3. in-house digital expertise to manage these changes effectively;
  - 10.4. suppliers, both existing suppliers and new entrants to the market;
  - 10.5. management of outsourced and shared services;
  - 10.6. providing excellent services to customers; and
  - 10.7. the need for strong links with central government digital transformation projects such as universal credit which are creating a de facto national digital infrastructure.
11. The 'Digital Programme' will seek to address these areas and will concentrate on practical action to support councils and their partners, to:
  - 11.1. improve the quality of their digital services through use of customer insight;
  - 11.2. simplify the user experience of transactions;

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- 11.3. understand the issues surrounding those people who remain in the 'assisted digital'<sup>1</sup> category; support their transition to transacting with digital services; and how to cater for their needs via other channels in the meantime; and
  - 11.4. support join up and strong local authority input into relevant national digital service transformation programmes.
12. The 'Digital Programme' will launch on 4 March 2013 at the LGA to an invited audience from across central and local government, attended by Brandon Lewis MP. An agenda is under development, but it is suggested that a ***member of the Improvement and Innovation Board chairs the meeting.***

**Key Issues**

13. In order for the principles of 'LocalGov Digital' to gain traction in councils, support at senior level is required. This can be achieved by the LGA supporting the establishment of this group and endorsing membership of the network.
14. The LGA and member councils need to play an active role in the development of a 'Digital Programme' to ensure that it keeps to the principles of sector-led improvement and is appropriate for local government.

**Financial Implications**

15. DCLG will bear the costs of the Digital Programme.
16. Facilitation of LocalGov Digital will be absorbed within the core digital communications budget.
17. As this work progresses, budget for any project based work will be requested separately.

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<sup>1</sup> The Government's [Digital Landscape Research](#) shows that 18% of UK adults are offline (defined as rarely or never being online). 82% of people are online (defined as regularly or occasionally using the internet) but some have lower digital skills and may need help, at least initially, to use digital services.

## **Appendix A - LocalGov Digital: Terms of reference**

### **Purpose**

LocalGov Digital is a practitioner network created and functioning in the spirit of local government's sector-led improvement agenda. Its overarching purpose is to raise standards in web provision and the use of digital by councils across the country, and to create a digital framework that is flexible enough to respond to local needs. It exists to support improvement strategies in the delivery of services so that local government can be efficient, productive and serve local needs.

### **Steering group**

At the core is a steering group that is mobilised and committed to actively growing the network. The members represent the breadth of local government both regionally and by authority type so can act as a voice for digital practitioners across local government.

They embrace and promote best practice from inside and outside local government, locally, nationally and internationally, and are committed to open collaborative working at all of these levels.

### **Principles**

*The overarching and fundamental principle is that local government is 'open by default and digital by design'*

Members of the group are committed to:

1. Coordinating a wider network of local government digital/web practitioners.
2. Raising aspirations for digital provision in local government.
3. Working to a common set of principles and standards.
4. Establishing a list of good suppliers.
5. Helping each other to learn and improve.
6. Sharing ideas, best practice and tools amongst peers
7. Collaborating on common solutions.
8. Raising the profile of local government web issues with senior officers and elected members.

### **Responsibilities**

The steering group will:

1. Meet in person or via video/audio conferencing.
2. Use a collaborative space (currently the Knowledge Hub) to develop ideas and thinking.
3. Publish coherent thinking to a public site.
4. Explore opportunities for peer review and challenge of council digital services to ensure improvement is sector-led and relevant.
5. Nominate new members to ensure a varied mix of skills, geographical location and authority type is maintained within the group.

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Members will:

1. Play an active role in the group.
2. Proactively involve their surrounding councils in group activity and promote the work of the network.
3. Participate in a range of digital projects that may or may not be either commissioned via the group but, if it the subject matter is relevant to the aims of the group, they are requested to represent 'LocalGov digital' and report progress back.