



# Cheshire East Digital Strategy

2022 - 2024

Open

Fair

Green

## INTRODUCTION

# Our Digital Strategy supports our vision of becoming an **open, fair and green** Cheshire East.

Digital is now a part of most people's everyday lives. We use it to buy products, to access services, to connect with family and friends, to deliver our businesses and to support our health and well-being.

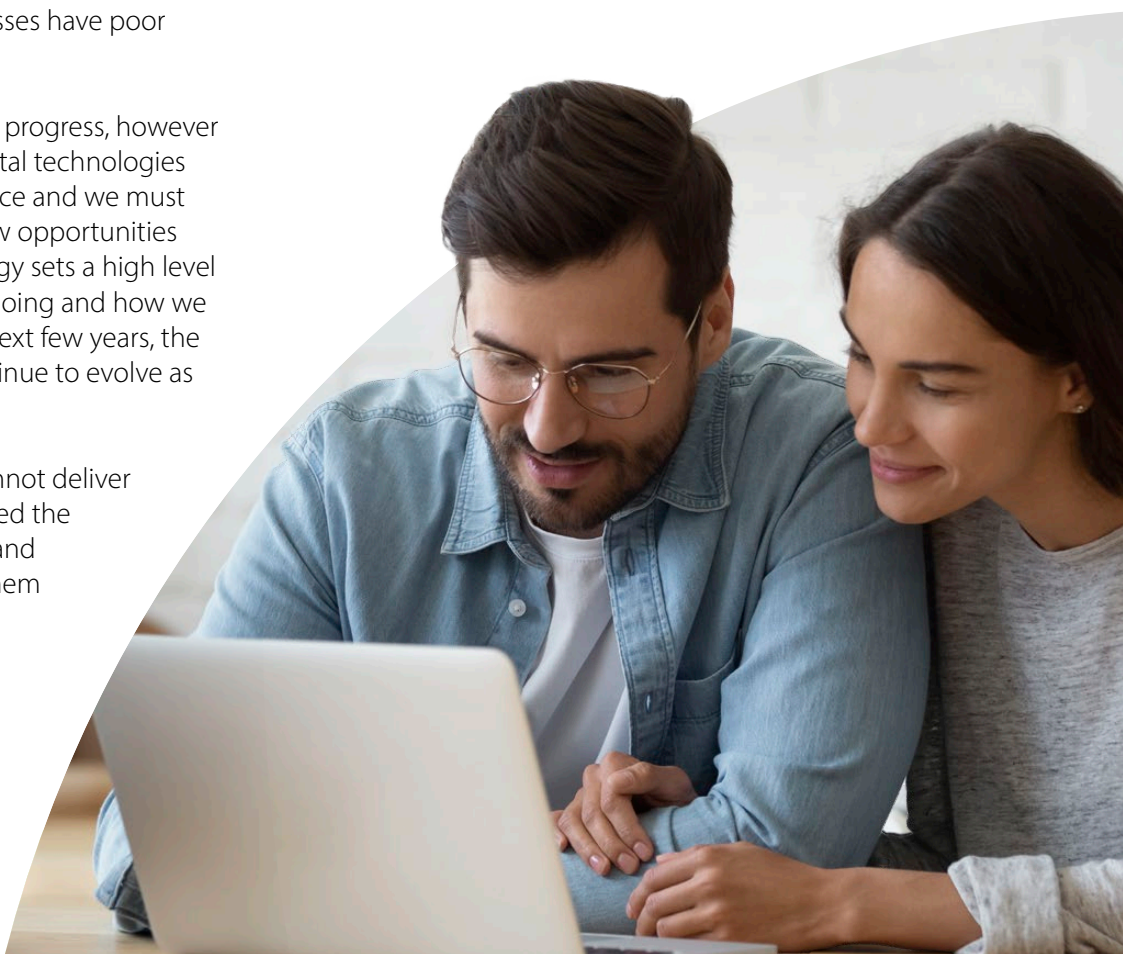
Digital brings significant opportunities for the residents and businesses of Cheshire East. It can help to improve our economy, our care services, make the council a more efficient organisation and enable the council to deliver better services and a better customer experience. It supports much of what the council is doing to become open, fair and green (defined in our Corporate Plan).

Whilst digital undoubtedly creates opportunities, it also brings challenges. We need to ensure that we continue to support those who are unable or choose not to use digital. We need to address inequalities for those in our most disadvantaged

communities and those communities where individuals and businesses have poor connectivity.

We have already made strong progress, however there is more to be done. Digital technologies also continue to change at pace and we must be flexible to adapt to the new opportunities this presents. While this strategy sets a high level framework for where we are going and how we will move forwards over the next few years, the detail of what we do will continue to evolve as we deliver and learn.

We also recognise that we cannot deliver this strategy alone. We will need the support of our partners, staff and communities and we thank them for their contribution to the development of this strategy.





To use the power of digital innovation to redesign the council and the services it provides – making Cheshire East a **better place to live and work** and **supporting our residents and businesses to thrive.**

# OUR DIGITAL AIMS

1

Provide  
**innovative**  
public  
services

2

Create a  
**sustainable**  
digital  
infrastructure

3

Create a  
**vibrant** digital  
economy

4

**Improve**  
health,  
wellbeing &  
inclusion

## OUR DIGITAL PRINCIPLES



### DIGITAL FOR ALL

Everyone can benefit from the council's digital transformation including customers, residents, businesses, rural communities and community sectors.



### ONE DIGITAL

The strategy and solutions will cut across services and communities, ensuring joined-up working, driving efficiencies and improving customer experience.



### DIGITAL BY DESIGN

We will design services to be as efficient as possible to improve the customer experience. Services will be designed to encourage customers to choose the digital option first, but not to exclude those who do not.



### GREEN DIGITAL

Our digital transformation will support the council's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to influence carbon reduction across the borough aiming for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045.



### SAFE DIGITAL

Security and resilience will be at the core of all our digital developments. The safety of customers' personal information and data will be paramount. We will develop and adhere to a set of ethical principles for the use of digital technology .



### TRANSPARENT DIGITAL

We will use digital technology to make the council, its decision making and the information it holds more accessible for all.



### INNOVATIVE DIGITAL

We will embrace new technologies, testing our ideas and adopting an agile approach to service delivery. Innovation will be continuously informed by customer feedback.



### DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS

We will ensure that we have the technology, governance, delivery mechanism, leadership, skills, and culture to deliver against the strategy.





# 1 Provide innovative public services

## VISION :

To be an information-led council, delivering services which are responsive, convenient, accessible and safe in a consistent and cost effective way.

## Ambitions

**Digital technology and culture will form our foundations** as an open, fair and green organisation.

**Digital services will be designed around the needs of customers** – they will be accessible and appealing, encouraging those who can to use them, while not excluding those who can't.

**The data we hold will be safe, secure and private** where appropriate and of good quality, underpinning our decision making.

**We will embrace new technologies,** test ideas and develop a culture of innovation to improve services and deliver value for money.

**Non digital channels** such as telephony and face to face will continue to be provided and improved to ensure everyone has equal access to council services.



## Facts & Figures



The council receives more than  
**5 million**  
visits per year to its corporate website  
[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk)



**Around 70%**  
**of all enquiries**  
to the council are made through digital channels – online, through chatbots or e-forms.

## Progress so far...

Our Customer Experience Strategy was approved in 2021 and a programme has been established to deliver its aims.

The corporate website is currently being updated and refreshed to improve the user experience.

Our digital platform is being reviewed to ensure we are making the best use of technology and can deliver an excellent online customer experience.

We have an Information and Data Management Programme to review and make best use of the information we hold and to consider innovative approaches to how we can use that data safely and securely.

We have invested in new technologies for our workforce, initially to support the need for home working during the Covid pandemic but which now brings further opportunities for more efficient working practices.





## Actions - Improve digital services for customers

1

**Deliver a re-designed corporate website**

which is easy for customers to find information and access council services.

2

**Re-design our services around the customer,**

work with customers to co-design services which meet customer needs and are delivered in a way which makes it easy for them to access.

3

**Implement a customer experience platform**

to improve management of all customer contact, including telephone calls, emails and online services.

4

**Consider options to enable customers to personalise information and preferences**

and to extend the ability to access personal data in a secure and safe environment.

5

**Continue to deliver and improve traditional access channels**

such as telephony and face to face for those who need them.





## Actions - Make greater use of data to inform decision making

1

**Embed the council's Information Strategy** enabling data-led decision making across services. Make data publicly available to support decision making by partners and to allow council performance to be assessed.

2

**Provide a robust framework for the use of people's data,** and provide staff with the skills and knowledge to use that data confidently and competently.

3

**Implement the technology required to hold data centrally** and ensure data is consistent, secure and accurate across the council – in turn providing a single view of key business entities such as customer and property.

4

**Implement and ensure access to data sharing frameworks** particularly around the adult social care and health domain, to provide support in areas such as violence prevention and mental health.



## Actions - Drive efficiencies and service improvements

1

**Continue to support flexible ways of working**  
using technology to allow staff to work from any location or within their local communities.

2

**Develop an agile approach to digital transformation**  
reducing the time and cost of technology change.

3

**Test innovative technologies**  
including automation to improve service delivery and reduce costs.

4

**Continue to grow our digital ecosystem,**  
particularly the technology which allows us to seamlessly interface between internal and external systems.



## 2 Sustainable digital infrastructure

### VISION :

**Supporting the delivery of a world-class, area-wide digital infrastructure, allowing everyone to access and benefit from digital technologies.**



## Ambitions

**All residents and businesses will be able to access high speed broadband** in their home or locality.

**We will use Smart City technology** to drive efficiencies and to support the council's green agenda.

We will work with planning colleagues to require **all new developments to allow for fibre broadband**.

We will work towards the government commitment of **full fibre broadband to all by 2025**.

**We will modernise Wi-Fi access** in our council buildings and work with partners to allow staff to work from multiple locations.

## Facts & Figures



Currently, more than  
**96%** of Cheshire premises  
can access speeds of  
**30Mbps or above**



A national target to achieve  
**85%**  
full fibre gigabit (with speeds  
>1000mbps) capable coverage  
by 2025 has been set. **Cheshire East's current full fibre coverage position is 28%**

## Progress so far...

We have worked with partners across Cheshire to deliver the first three phases of the Connecting Cheshire roll-out, providing broadband access to an additional 106,000 premises; of which over 90,000 are now able to access superfast, or above speeds broadband.

All libraries and Connected Community centres provide access to free Wi-Fi.

We have replaced more than 39,000 street lights in Cheshire East since 2015 with light emitting diode (LED) lighting.

A report by Rural England has found that:



**1/3** of rural households are unable to make a mobile phone call indoors

**1/2** are unable to access 4G mobile networks



## **Actions - Support access to broadband within homes and businesses**

1

**Deliver the aims of Connecting Cheshire**, in partnership with Airband, to roll out gigabit-capable, full-fibre broadband connectivity to more than 4,000 properties across rural or hard-to-reach areas of Cheshire.

2

**Identify areas of poor broadband and mobile connectivity** and work with providers to improve.

3

**Work with planning policies** to support 5G provision and to require the provision of full fibre broadband in all new properties.



## Actions - Provide access in the community

1

**Improve the provision of Wi-Fi and the Peoples Network** within all libraries and community centres.

2

**Review and implement options to develop a community grant scheme** to fund equipment, subsidise broadband and Wi-Fi installation for those on low incomes.

3

**Develop proposals to support care leavers** through the provision of affordable connectivity.

4

**Review the Cheshire East buildings estate to identify options to** create flexible, well-connected and short-term/pop-up work spaces.





## Actions - Develop digital technologies to support the council's green agenda

1



2



3



4

**Implement technology to support a reduction in carbon emissions**  
such as the use of LED street lighting or real time data to promote the use of public transport.

**Maximise the use of artificial intelligence** and digital technologies to proactively monitor the condition of our roads, pavements and highway assets. and to support service delivery such as waste services.

**Work with planning** to encourage developers to integrate smart technology concepts into new developments, such as domestic car charging points.

**Work with distribution network operators** to provide smart grid services to strengthen our ability to manage power usage and generation, and integrate smart technologies such as vehicle-to-grid charging.



### 3 To create a vibrant digital economy

#### VISION :

A digitally skilled workforce and an internationally recognised area for digital businesses to thrive.

## Ambitions

**Develop the workforce to provide the right skills for our economy** by supporting our residents to improve their skill levels and ensuring education provision meets the demands of our employers.

**Create the right conditions for business growth** with a focus on our key businesses and growth sectors through tailored support, the provision of inward investment opportunities and place marketing.

**Increase the diffusion of best practice** so that small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have the tools to become more productive and encourage SMEs to adopt digital technologies and practices.

**Work with organisations and schools** to support young people into digital careers.



## Facts & Figures



The 2018 Tech Nation report estimated the value of the UK's Digital Tech economy to be nearly

**£185Billion**

growing at a rate nearly

**3x faster** than the rest of the UK economy.



Cheshire East economy annually delivers

**£13.5B**



**45%** of businesses experienced recruitment difficulties and

**85%** cited skills as an issue, with a significant proportion requiring digital and science, technology, engineering and maths or "STEM" skills

## Progress so far...

Delivery of the Digital+ programme providing SMEs with free expert support on digital marketing and technology, including social media and cloud computing, as well as how to optimise their website.

Development of a fresh suite of business development masterclasses and business consultancy to help businesses transform, develop and grow digitally.

Delivery of the Adoption of Digital Accounting and Payment Technology (ADAPT) programme, offering eligible businesses access to a dedicated knowledge portal with best-practice guides and information to support the understanding of the technologies available, the associated benefits and the route to adoption.





## Actions - Provide digital support for businesses

1

### **Provide business access through a single portal**

where all businesses can go to for support to start up and grow and to attract inward investment.

2

### **Provide digital services for businesses -**

an online account for all council services to businesses.

3

**Deliver business master classes** to enable businesses to maximise the benefits through connectivity.

4

**Continue to deliver the Adapt Project – (adoption of digital accounting and payment)** partnership with Barclays to promote digital accounting and payment.



## Actions - Develop the digital workforce

1

**Continue to support the work of the Digital Skills Partnership** in supporting digital skills and growth across the region.

2

**Provide young people with innovative opportunities** to develop existing digital skills and learn new ones, such as Luminate Youth.

3

**Develop a programme of digital skills** training for Cheshire East staff to enable them to support customers and businesses to become more digitally enabled.

4

**Work in partnership with Job Centre Plus and Springboard** to provide skills and training, including digital skills, to those on benefits wishing to work in the hospitality sector.



## Actions - Develop the digital economy of Cheshire

1

**Deliver a wider economic development/place marketing approach**

- establishing and promoting Cheshire East as a centre for digital business and promoting Cheshire East as a vibrant destination for visitors, locals and those looking to relocate.

2

**Establish Digital Innovation hubs**

to support start-up businesses operating in the digital economy.

3

**Seek to secure additional resource and funding to develop**

business clustering programmes for fintech and creative industries, and develop 5G pilots.

4

**Work with Connecting Cheshire**

to provide solutions for businesses with poor or no connectivity.





## 4 To improve health, well-being and inclusion

### VISION :

An area where people (individuals and communities) live well for longer; independently and enjoying the place where they live. Where all residents have the opportunity to make the most of digital technology, giving them the access, awareness, skills and confidence to participate online safely.

## Ambitions

**Utilise digital solutions** to support people to stay independent for longer.

**Empower individuals to care for themselves** and take control of their own health and wellbeing.

**Achieve a joined-up, efficient and informed patient journey**, based on secure, real-time patient data.

**Ensure no-one is excluded** from the benefits of digital.

Older residents and those with a disability, who are most likely to be digitally excluded will **have the skills, knowledge and confidence to use digital**.

**Our children** will have the skills and confidence to enjoy the benefits of digital technology safely and to be protected from inappropriate behaviour.

## Facts & Figures



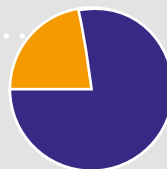
**14.1%**  
of Cheshire East  
adults have **never  
been online or have  
not been online in  
the last three months.**

**21%** of Cheshire East adults  
do **NOT** have all five  
basic digital skills



- Communicating
- Transacting
- Problem-solving
- Creating
- Managing information

**22.5%**  
of Cheshire East adults are over  
65, the fastest growing ageing  
population in the North West.



## Progress so far...

We have worked with partner organisations to develop digital skills groups and one-to-ones along with devices for members to 'try before they buy'.

Our Connected Communities centres provide spaces, services and activities where people need them, including providing digital access and support to local residents. The Live Well directory of health, well-being and support services website has been updated and now includes Care Finder – an on-line tool which helps you arrange care services.

The 'My CareView' patient held record has also been launched and proactively promoted. We have delivered the Cheshire Care Record, providing a single view of an individual's health and social care information in one digital record.



## Actions - Make digital devices more readily available

1

**Continued maintenance and support for the Department for Education laptop scheme** for children with a social worker.

2

**Develop further opportunities** for the refurbishment, re-use and recycling of disused devices.

3

**Raise awareness of device loan schemes** and the library Hublet devices.

4

**Provide advice and guidance** to make the most of a device and being online through our 'Digital Buddies'.





## Actions - Grow digital skills, motivation and confidence

1

**Deliver and promote a strong local digital skills offer**, bringing together council services and partner organisations to deliver free digital skills training and support.

2

**Provide access to Learn My Way and IT and Chat** within all libraries and community centres.

3

**Work with partners to** develop a proactive approach to keeping our children safe online.



## Actions - Improve the health and independence of Cheshire residents

1

**Deliver and extend** the integrated patient care record.



2

**Review and implement options to mitigate the impact** of the National Digital Switchover due 2025.



3

**Explore how we can use telemedicine and assistive technology** to keep people safe and give them rapid access to support.



4

**Continue to develop “Live well” as the one-stop online portal** and directory to useful information, guidance and advice.

This overarching **Digital Strategy** will be supported with **detailed plans** for each theme and a series of measures against which **our performance can be assessed.**

