

## TORBAY COUNCIL IT STRATEGY 2022/23 - 2024/25

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## DELIVERING ORGANISATIONAL PRIORITIES

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After a period of uncertainty, we now have a clear direction that we will continue to operate as a dedicated in-house service. We must now ensure Torbay Council receives the full benefits of an IT Service which is exclusively focused on delivering the organisation's priorities as set out in the [Community and Corporate Plan](#).

This strategy outlines IT Services' role in delivering those priorities, and aligns in particular with the [Council Redesign Programme \(CRP\)](#).

This strategy also addresses the capacity and cultural changes which are necessary for an in-house team to provide a resilient and reliable IT service underpinning everything the organisation does, within the financial constraints of local government.

Reliance on IT to deliver council services and enable transformation is more critical than ever, and our staff and infrastructure resilience must reflect that. Resilience can only be achieved by fully embracing the Standardise, Simplify, and Share philosophy, creating more time to deliver complex projects, to share knowledge more widely, to improve our documentation, and to improve staff training and development

## TORBAY COUNCIL DIGITAL STRATEGY

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The Council Redesign Program provides the organisation's digital strategy, with an objective to...

"modernise, simplify and standardise how we work so we can support the communities of Torbay and build a resilient council fit for the future".

Several projects are already running to ensure that objective is met, and each one both relies on IT for delivery and provides a pattern for how IT should operate.

- The "Our Organisation" Project requires that council services be digital by default, driving efficiencies through greater use of IT
- The "Our Community" Project will provide people and communities with easier access to support, information, influence, and to act for themselves.
- The "Our People" Project seeks to create an agile and high performing workforce.
- The "Future Ways of Working" Project aims to decouple work from location.

## A MODERN AND SECURE IT SERVICE

Since the last strategy document, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly accelerated our digital transformation agenda, changing the way we work and the way many customers interact with the council.

Key to progressing this transformation is the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which will bring many services under one modern platform for customers, staff, and suppliers. By shifting routine customer interactions to self-service, officer time will be freed to focus on the more urgent and complex issues.

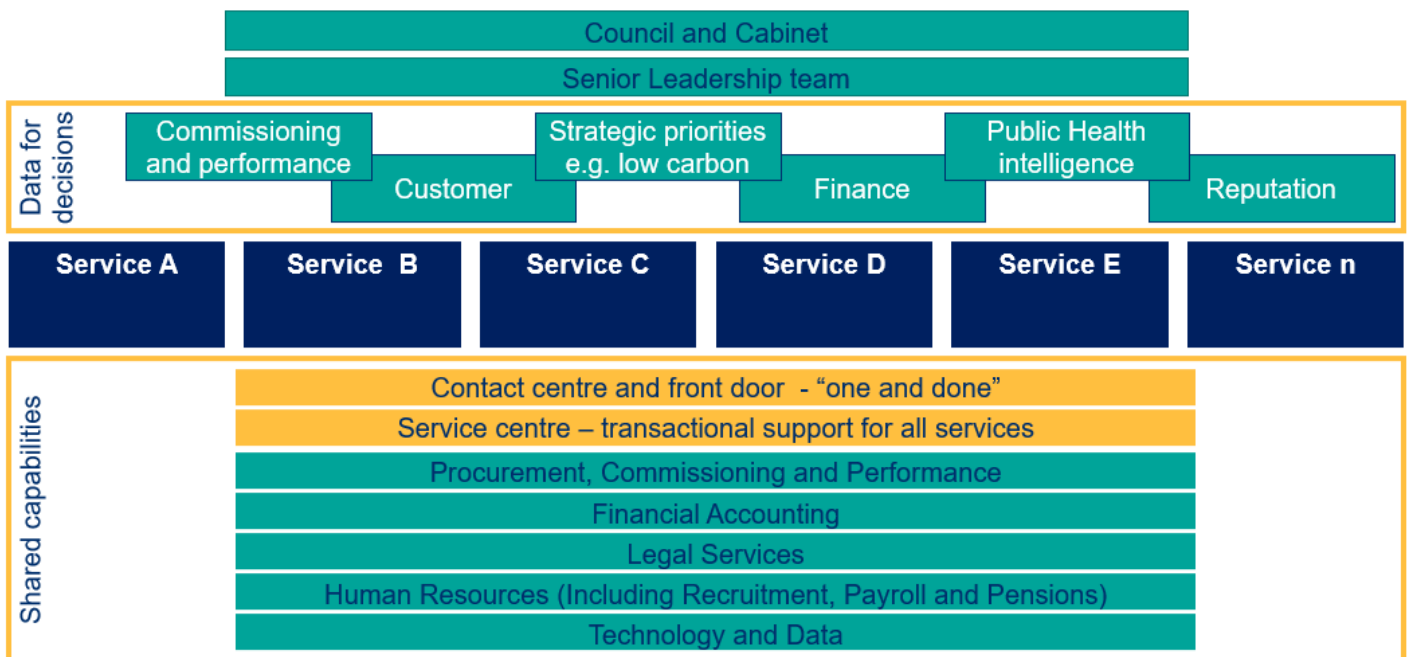
Hand-in-hand with this increase in digitisation across local government has been an increasing risk of cybercrime, endangering all the digital services we provide and all the information we hold. We have a responsibility to our customers, internal and external, to ensure safe and reliable services.

## THE ROLE OF IT SERVICES IN TRANSFORMATION

The simplified diagram below summarises the council's target operating model - where the transformation agenda will take us to deliver best value. This new operating model implements the standardise, simplify, and share philosophy across all services, and is contingent upon good technology and data.

IT Services provides that technology and secures access to that data - we are at the heart of Torbay Council's transformation.

### Target Operating Model



## Customer Relationship Management

The CRM is a major strand of the transformation agenda and will become one of the most visible results of the Standardise, Simplify and Share philosophy, bringing together several services and systems under one modern and consistent cloud platform.

Customers will predominately serve themselves using online information and transactions at a time and place of their choosing, using any modern browser on any digital device.

Artificial intelligence, chat-bots, automated communications across a range of mediums, and simplified processes for both customers and staff, will allow officers time to concentrate on the more complex problems and on those who cannot use digital methods.

All business areas will benefit from a full service review, modernising and simplifying their operation and digitising wherever possible through the CRM.

A golden record will bring together a single view of the customer from our disparate databases, and powerful reporting tools will allow senior decision makers to identify trends, connections, and opportunities.

- Whenever a service presents a new work request to IT, we will consider how it can be implemented through, or integrate with, the CRM.

## Exploiting Microsoft 365

While online meetings and the latest Office client are the most apparent benefits to our customers, there is far more available to us and we can only realise the full value of our investment when more of these are deployed.

That value is not just financial, it includes all the benefits of integrating a range of operational functions into one service, including client device management and cyber security, providing IT with a golden record of our internal customers.

- We will work with partners to deepen our knowledge of all that Microsoft 365 offers and will ensure that beneficial features and information are made widely available to the organisation.

## Improving Cyber Security

Since the emergence of ransomware as a tool of organised crime and rogue states, a number of local authorities have fallen victim with catastrophic impacts on services and budgets. We are no longer just collateral damage of unsophisticated mass target attacks, or a supply line to higher value organisations, but are now a direct target of well-resourced and persistent cyber threats.

The rest of this section has been redacted for security reasons.

## Remote Working

Our internal customers want a consistent experience, regardless of whether they are at home or in the office. Most of our applications already work well outside the office, but not yet all, preventing staff from working in the same way from any location they choose.

- Whenever a service presents a new work request, we will consider how the possible solutions will work over a remote office connection, rejecting any which prevents customers from working in a manner of their choosing.

# TRANSFORMATION IN IT SERVICES

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While delivering transformative technology across the organisation, we must also transform our own service using the same principles to deliver a resilient service.

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## Building Resilience

A modern and secure IT service is not reliant on single individuals to keep critical systems operating, is well trained, maintains documentation to a high standard, and operates a structured change control process.

Providing a resilient service across the full scope of our complex infrastructure demands that we focus our resources where they make best use of internal expertise. Doing so means fully embracing the Standardise, Simplify and Share philosophy, reducing bespoke development and configurations.

Full resilience within staffing constraints requires greater use of cloud services and external expertise, and ensuring as much value as possible is realised from any technology partnerships.

## Cloud First

Cloud services go a long way to addressing our in-house resource constraints and providing that space for us to focus on providing professional services for in-house systems.

- Reduce the likelihood and scope of cyber-security incidents
- Reduce the scope of disaster recovery.
- Reduce the impact of local infrastructure failure
- Reduce the number of servers to backup and maintain
- Reduce the number of software clients to install and maintain.
- Outsource the burden of supporting, upgrading and patching applications and infrastructure
- Reduce our carbon footprint.

Our customers also benefit directly:

- High system performance
- Reduced downtime
- Always up to date

## External Expertise

The case for cloud can never encompass the multitude of systems and services we offer, and a wide range will continue to be developed and delivered in house. However, expertise in that range cannot be sufficiently distributed across a small in-house team, so resilience can only be improved through outsourcing support for selective technologies. This will allow us to concentrate on developing the most critical in-house skills.

We will establish those technologies which offer best value when supported in-house, and ensure we are resilient in those skills. We will supplement support for other technologies through contracts with external experts.

## Resolve Immediate Capacity Issues

Supporting further digitisation requires an additional Public Access and Channel Shift officer. This position has been filled for two years through a series of rolling temporary contracts funded in a variety of ways, but this resource is required for the foreseeable future.

## Rolling Client Replacement Program

We will instigate the replacement of all client devices within 5 years, ensuring reliable and modern equipment for all staff, and reducing equipment failure and cyber security risks. This will increase demands on the desktop support team, but failure and support requests will reduce, while greater standardisation will simplify the estate.

## Rolling Infrastructure Replacement Program

We will ensure all infrastructure is replaced in advance of any supplier withdrawing support.

## Training

It is essential that IT Staff keep up to date with trends and technology to provide rapid resolution to customer issues and to identify opportunities to improve IT Services or Council efficiency. Every member of IT will reserve 1/2 a day each month for professional development.

## Delivering Improvements

- We will reduce knowledge silos and improve customer support through a wider distribution of in-house knowledge and skills and improved training.
- We will ensure full value is achieved from our Microsoft Subscription, expanding our knowledge of the services available and their potential to improve our own and wider council efficiency.
- We will use the CRM to expand self-service options for customers, and to provide self-help and service status information, reducing the need for our customers to contact the service desk.
- We will replace all client devices within 5 years, maintaining acceptable performance and security while reducing the risk of hardware, software, and performance issues.
- We will ensure removal of all legacy hardware software, and ensure costed plans are established for their replacement at least 12 months before vendor support expires.
- We will develop a Bring Your Own Device policy, allowing customers to use their own mobile and desktop devices for convenience, and to reduce the impact of managed infrastructure faults.

## Mobile & Remote First

All public facing digital services will be accessible on any non-legacy device and browser. All new and replacement staff facing services will work across low bandwidth connections, supporting the Future Ways of Working Project.

## Professionalisation

All requests for new projects will be fully specified by the customer, including acceptance testing criteria.

All requests will be responded to with a realistic timescale, to include essential internal knowledge sharing and documentation.

A formal change control process will be established for all teams, reducing implementation failure and rollback.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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Our guiding principles underpin the design principles of Standardise, Simplify and Share and make up a framework that governs the development of the strategy and subsequent design, build and run of IT&D. These are:

Principal	Description
IT&D1	Put the customer at the heart of everything we do (internal and external customers)
IT&D2	Source solutions from the providers who deliver best value for money, considering the security, lifecycle management, availability, and DR benefits of Cloud solutions.
IT&D3	Design in flexibility for demand and cost (EG Cloud Services)
IT&D4	Deliver leading edge business solutions, using experts to guide our own skilled and motivated staff
IT&D5	Protect our IT&D service and data, balancing value for money and risk
IT&D6	Benchmark against the best, emulate where appropriate
IT&D7	Data is centric, leverage our information assets to facilitate our business
IT&D8	Partner, collaborate and integrate
IT&D9	Consolidate and rationalise
IT&D10	Insist on all things open. EG: Standards, specification, and integration

# CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

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The best strategies consult and involve stakeholders and partners on the planned outcomes as part of the governance process. This must happen as this strategy is put in place and becomes more than words on a page.

# DRIVERS

This section identifies some of the key drivers that have influenced the development of the IT strategy:

Driver	Description
Community and Corporate Plan	IT Services plays a key role in achieving the vision of a council fit for the future. Beyond that, as an enabler of change, IT Services has a role in delivering the ambition of a thriving community and economy and achieving carbon neutrality.
Council Redesign Programme	This programme relies on digital technology to deliver the improvements and efficiencies necessary for Torbay Council to become fit for the future.
Bridge the government funding gap	With large cuts from central government funding continuing, investments in IT solutions (as well as other investments) must provide a clear return of value to the Bay. This driver will be met by Torbay Council becoming more commercial. It also requires simplifying the way we do things, standardising the way we work and sharing investment with partners.
Focus on customer experience	By putting customers at the heart of everything we do, we can improve the services to our internal and external customers by ensuring that they get what they need at the first time of asking. This allows the Council and its partners to continue providing services despite funding reductions.
Alignment of investment across the Council and with partners	The principles in the strategy allow governance groups to make decisions that promote greater reuse of investments made within the Council and by partners.
Enabling innovation and collaboration	Doing things differently and working together is an essential building block to a modern Council dealing with a changing environment and customer needs. IT services should enable and support these ways of working, where traditionally they may have been a barrier.
Securely using technology and information to improve services	The Council needs to continue to protect customer data so that our citizens have confidence in us. By collecting the right data, and sharing between partners, we can use it to make better decisions faster and provide more effective public services.

# EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This strategy will be focussed on how we measure our success, ensuring we are reviewing this regularly over the next period. This strategy supports the business direction of standardising, simplifying, and sharing. The success of the strategy will partially be measured by its ability to enable these outcomes and partially through the following direct outcomes and measures:

Outcome	Value	Measure
Reduction in the number of vendor contracts	Allows the Council to focus efforts on explaining our strategy and requirements in fewer meetings as well as achieving savings from consolidating platforms	Reduction in number of separate vendor agreements
Supporting customer service to be delivered wherever and whenever customers need it	Fewer failures in service delivery and reduced cost of service delivery	Increase of contacts resolved at point of contact. Increase of contacts managed digitally
Improve data security	Builds confidence in partners that sharing their data with Torbay Council is safe	Reduction in incidents requiring notification to the information commissioner and reduction in issues raised during PCN audit

## Risks of reducing the number of vendor contracts

The risk that we become overly dependent on a small group of incumbent vendors, who are then not motivated to provide a best value service, should be mitigated at the contract stage. Contracts should include agreements on the format and costs of data migration away from the incumbent at the end of the contract, and reasonable early termination fees.

However, consolidating services with a reduced number of vendors arises directly from the Standardise Simplify and Share philosophy, which is essential to achieving further efficiency. In addition, the market already has limited vendors of local government specific systems, so the risks are increased but not new.

The alternative of continuing with a more diverse set of vendors as we digitise as much as possible will require greater IT resource to implement and maintain. It also reduces our ability to establish a coherent view of our customers and to generate reliable business intelligence across a wide range of services.



# GOVERNANCE

The aim of these structures will be to delegate as much as possible so that decisions are made at the lowest level meeting in order that only exceptions are escalated. Escalated exceptions will need discussion and understanding where the implications are profound and/or expensive.

Governance	Purpose
SLT	<p>SLT will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree and adopt the IT Strategy</li> <li>Set the direction for the organisation</li> <li>Ensure a joined-up approach across all directorates</li> </ul>
Programme Boards	<p>The Programme Boards will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve project related change requests outside of project tolerances</li> <li>Manage programme dependencies</li> <li>Escalate issues to the Transformation Programme Review Group</li> </ul>
Project Boards	<p>The Project Boards will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve change requests within project tolerances</li> <li>Approve documentation for submission to Programme Board</li> </ul>
Commissioning Review Group	<p>The Commissioning Review Group will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Own the Council wide IT strategy and implementation</li> <li>Ensure IT is aligned with the Council's strategic objectives and all change initiatives</li> <li>Review the Council's progress towards the IT Strategy and take corrective actions</li> <li>Ensure technical benefits are realised</li> <li>Manage high level risks and issues</li> </ul>
Technical Design Authority	<p>The Technical Design Authority will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approve designs and change requests with impacts on Partnership Data, Applications and Technology</li> <li>Ensure architectural compliance</li> <li>Recommend to the Commissioning Group the rationalisation of corporate assets.</li> </ul>

# CONCLUSION

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This Information and Technology (IT) strategy provides a guide for how IT will support and implement Torbay Council's Corporate Plan and Redesign Programme.

The priority is to improve resilience through increased use of Cloud Services and external expertise, allowing time for IT Staff to focus on a reduced set of skills and knowledge, and to distribute that more widely to reduce knowledge silos.

This strategy will be reviewed at least yearly to ensure it remains current and supported throughout the Council.