Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council

Joint Digital Strategy 2021-24

Introduction

The Joint Digital Strategy details Chorley and South Ribble's shared ambition to further develop our use of digital, technology and data to improve our services and deliver even better outcomes for our customers. Delivering the strategy will help to change the way that we work, providing a customer focus through the development of increasingly digital councils, boroughs, and services.

Our vision:

Working together to harness the potential of digital, technology and data to deliver better services and outcomes for residents, businesses, and communities.

The following drivers of change summarise key challenges and opportunities that the Joint Digital Strategy aims to address. The Digital Position Paper for Chorley and South Ribble Councils provides more information about the context that has been considered in the development of the strategy.

- **Digital inclusion**: Get Digital's 'Digital Exclusion Heatmap' considers how access to infrastructure and skills can impact the likelihood of exclusion from digital services and technology. The Heatmap demonstrates that some residents across Chorley and South Ribble require additional help, with around 22% of adults across both authorities without all 5 basic digital skills. In an increasingly digital world, is important to ensure that all customers can access digital services provided by the council and other organisations, to reduce inequalities and enable residents to access digital opportunities.

	Chorley		South Ribble	
	%	Likelihood of exclusion	%	Likelihood of exclusion
% adults with all 5 basic digital skills	77	Medium	78	Low
% adults who have used all 5 skills in the last 3 months	44	Medium	45	Low
% adults who have not been online within the last 3 months	12.3	High	8.9	Medium
% households not receiving broadband of at least 10 Mbps	2	Low	1	Low

- **Channel shift:** shifting customer contact and service requests online makes it easier to manage customer demand, allows customers to access services anywhere at any time, and reduces costs, with SOCITM's estimates for online contact being just £0.15 per visit, in comparison to £2.83 for phone.

Whilst around 37% of access to council services is currently online, both Chorley and South Ribble could work further to make digital options the channel of choice for all customers.

Council	KPI	Baseline Target	Current %
South Ribble	% of self-service channels access vs phone/ face to face	18%	37%
Chorley	% of service requests received online	35%	37.54%

- **Customer experience**: as the commercial sector becomes increasingly flexible in how it serves its customers, councils must also adapt to residents' expectations regarding the provision of 'on demand' services. More than ever, customers expect to be able to communicate with councils through various channels, and request and pay for services at any time, on any device. To ensure the success of digital options, council's need to be aware of the customer journey, ensuring that digital services can be accessed easily and are designed to meet the user's needs.

- **Maximising technology**: advances in technology such as artificial intelligence, machine learning and cloud technology, bring new opportunities including the improved use of data, more sustainable systems, and increased automation and streamlining of processes. Councils can make innovative use of new technology to improve the user experience for staff and customers. However, a survey of organisations by the Work Foundation found that whilst 80 percent of managers say that technology had the potential to increase productivity, two thirds reported that this had not been achieved in the last 3 years. A focus on embedding, enabling and maximising the use of technology, is essential to ensuring that digital initiatives provide real value within the workplace.

- **Agile working**: agile working helps councils to become more flexible by allowing employees to be able to work effectively from any location. This can help to improve productivity, enable staff to complete tasks whilst out in the field, and provide resilience when adapting to new and challenging circumstances. Councils are increasingly embracing the benefits of agile working and have implemented initiatives to promote flexible, change positive cultures.

- **Covid-19:** the Covid-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to advance agile working technology to allow staff to work effectively through remote access to the council networks. The pandemic has changed the landscape of the workplace and created new opportunities in terms of home working and exploring new ways of working with teams, partners, and the community. However, Covid-19 has also impacted challenges such as deprivation and digital inclusion, and councils will consequently have to reevaluate the support that they provide for those who are digitally excluded.

The joint strategy sets out the framework for our key focuses over the next few years based on the current position and context of the councils. The strategy will also be flexible and responsive to evolving technological and social environments, and the changing challenges and opportunities that they bring.

Strategic priorities

The Joint Digital Strategy will align the digital approach between the councils whilst still supporting the corporate priorities of each sovereign council as outlined below:

| South Ribble	Chorley
• **Place, Homes & Environment-** opening opportunities for people to get the jobs they want and supporting businesses to do well	• **Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all-**developing easy access to high quality public services, both face to face and online
• **Health, Wellbeing & Safety -** providing residents and business with the skills, expertise, and resources to interact digitally, and actively working with partners to ensure residents receive the best services	• **An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area-** delivering shared council services, working with our partners to deliver sustainable public services, being an ambitious council that continually strives to improve
• **Excellence, Investment and Financial Sustainability-** focusing on improving the digital services of the council	• **A strong local economy-** a strong and expanding business sector and access to high quality employment and education opportunities
• **Our People & Communities-** making sure residents can engage in a way that works for them	• **Clean safe and healthy homes and communities**

The benefits of this approach include:

- Maximising the increased resources of partnership working to enable the opportunity to deliver a more ambitious digital strategy

- Increased resilience to ensure the strategy's successful delivery

- Learning from shared knowledge and experience

- Digital thinking and approaches will be aligned between the two councils, creating a consistent and productive environment for staff within shared services whilst maintaining the sovereignty of each council.

The strategy has also considered the individual OD, customer, and transformation strategies for each of the councils and their relationship to the Joint Digital Strategy. As digital programmes impact all areas of the council, the joint strategy should complement other key strategies and programmes, and work in tandem to achieve corporate objectives.

Themes and focus

The strategy has 4 key themes designed to achieve our shared vision and address the key drivers for change:
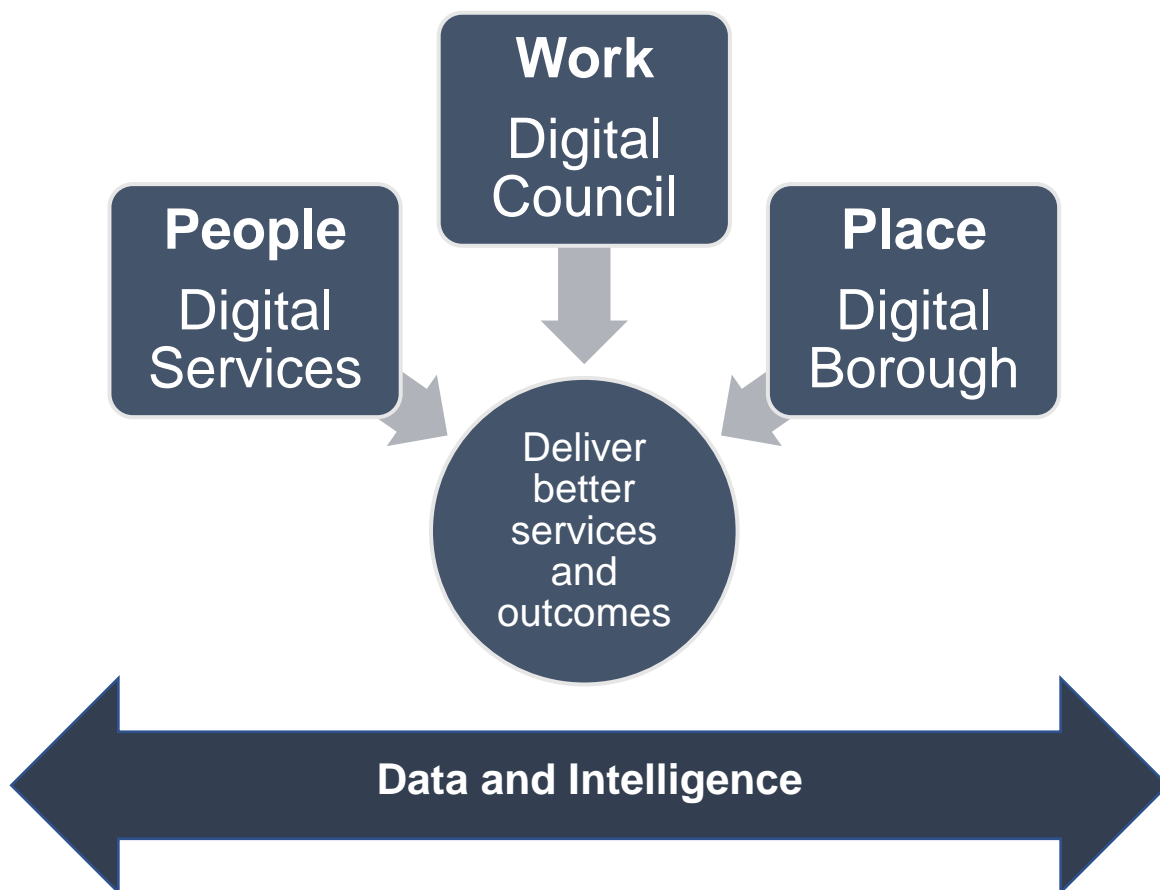
1. **WORK** (Digital Councils) We will use technology and business intelligence to become smarter, more efficient workplaces.

2. **PLACE** (Digital Boroughs) Together with our partners, we will proactively work to ensure that everyone in the borough has the right infrastructure, skills, and support to be able to make the best use of new technology.

3. **PEOPLE** (Digital Services) We will transform the relationships with our communities and businesses by providing an online experience so good that people will prefer to use digital channels and can do so unaided.

4. **Data and Intelligence** (Cross-cutting theme)

A specific focus on data and intelligence will allow Chorley and South Ribble to become smarter councils, powering the development of work, place, and people by enabling better decision making and supporting the delivery of innovative new technology.

WORK (Digital council)

We will use technology and business intelligence to become smarter, more efficient workplaces.

Focus

- Agile working
- Digital culture
- Customer focus

Our staff will have the right tools, skills and knowledge to enable them to work effectively from any location, enabling greater capacity and resource to improve the services that we provide. When in a council building, the environment will promote a digital culture with well-designed workspaces and break out areas that promote working in more agile and flexible ways.

We will realise the benefits of all technology by developing a digital culture that embraces digital and transformation projects and secures the necessary staff buy in and knowledge to enable their success. Staff will be digital champions because they experience the benefits of working in a digital way.

Principles

- Our workforce can make effective use of technology to communicate, safely share and store information, and work with increasing efficiency
- All council staff can work effectively from anywhere, including fast and reliable network and telephony access via the most appropriate device for their role
- Line of business applications are aligned and maximised across the two councils to support shared services and realise all benefits
- Our workplaces promote a digital culture in the way that they are set up and utilised with less paper and printing, and improved spaces for both work and welfare
- All council staff are confident in their digital understanding including online engagement, transparent working and GDPR

- All council staff have access to data and intelligence and have the knowledge, support and skills to manage and use data legally and ethically
- All council staff can find internal communication, resources and applications quickly and easily, and are digitally engaged in the organisation and decision making
- Council Members champion digital technology and will have the equipment, skills and knowledge to interact digitally with other Members, officers, and residents

PLACE (Digital borough)

Together with our partners, we will proactively work to ensure that everyone in the borough has the right infrastructure, skills, and support to be able to make the best use of new technology.

Focus

- Digital access
- Digital inclusion
- Skills support

We will work to remove barriers to digital inclusion and ensure that the right provision is in place to enable our residents, businesses and visitors to access digital services. More adults will have the digital skills that they need to be able to regularly access services online, and households and businesses will have the connectivity and equipment that they need to be part of the digital economy.

We will support the growth and development of digital opportunities within the borough, promoting digital careers and helping to upskill staff and businesses.

Principles

- The council encourages and supports residents to choose to access services digitally wherever possible
- Alternative service access is still made available for those residents who are unable to access digital services
- All residents are engaged with opportunities to develop their digital skills and are aware of the digital career pathways that are available to them
- Businesses' are supported in upskilling their staff and providing opportunities for the future workforce
- Digital spaces and resources in the borough are utilised as far as possible
- The council supports the development of digital infrastructure including the rollout of 5G and improving broadband coverage in rural areas
- The council works with public and private sector partners to deliver digital access, inclusion, and skills programmes to the community

PEOPLE (Digital services)

We will transform the relationships with our communities and businesses by providing an online experience so good that people will prefer to use digital channels and can do so unaided.

Focus

- Digital first
- High quality services
- Increased support

We will enable customers to be able to access services and interact with the council in the way that best meets their individual needs by developing the use of our digital channels and ensuring that services are well designed, responsive and of a high quality.

Customer satisfaction will improve as digital services will be easier to use and designed to provide a whole solution for our customers.

Principles

- Council services and information can be accessed through a range of digital channels, allowing customers to access services at any time, with any device
- The council offers digital services and self-serve options to residents wherever possible
- Processes are designed to be digital and are not just transferred to online, delivering higher quality services and improved customer feedback
- Digital services are designed around customer needs, are easy to access, provide a whole solution to a problem, and are simple and straightforward to use.
- The improvement of digital services is customer focused, led by resident feedback, insight, and intelligence.
- Use of digital services enables capacity to provide timely solutions to complex issues and help those who are most in need of support.

Data and Intelligence

We will use high-quality data and intelligence to deliver better decision-making and support the use of new and innovative technologies.

Focus

- Accessible and reusable information
- Transparent use of intelligence
- Security

Making better use of the data we collect will help to enable the other themes of the strategy by providing the intelligence that is necessary to maximise the use of automation, invest in

new technology such as AI, and enable more informed decision making within the council, our partners, and our communities. Data and intelligence will help to make our councils more efficient and provide more relevant and up-to-date information to our customers.

Principles

- Customers are confident and trust the council to be responsible in its collection, storage and use of data
- Data is collected, stored and used legally, ethically, and securely with all relevant safeguards in place to protect the data that the council holds
- Transparent data sets are made available to residents to support community projects and provide access to information about council services
- Data is stored in future-proof systems that allow information to be managed effectively, communicated with others, and reused wherever possible
- The council has set standards for data quality, ensuring consistency and integrity and enabling data to be used widely across the council.
- Opportunities to improve local services through the sharing of data with other public sector organisations are explored
- The relevant information sharing frameworks are in place to ensure that all sharing of data is responsible and secure.
- Officers have the capacity and skills to manage data effectively and enable wider use of information across the council.

How will the strategy be delivered?

Chorley and South Ribble Councils will develop a shared action plan for the Joint Digital Strategy, recognising the current positions of each council and the different actions that will be required for each organisation to achieve the shared vision. This will then be developed into an individual roadmap for each organisations.

Both councils will also have an enabling ICT strategy, which will be designed to support the delivery of the Joint Digital Strategy by developing the infrastructure and technology required to realise our principles and vision. The ICT strategy will be able to adapt to the different roadmaps of each council and change to accommodate shifts in local and external contexts

Joint Digital Strategy — Action Plan — Chorley Roadmap — Chorley ICT Strategy

South Ribble Roadmap — South Ribble Strategy
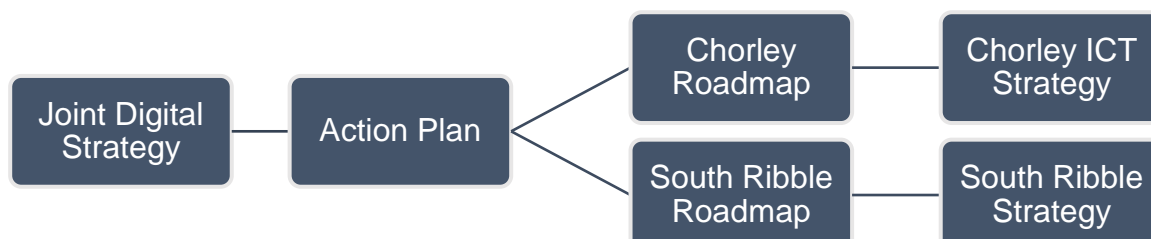
Key starting points for developing the shared action plan include:

WORK (Digital Council)

- Implement a worksmart environment across all council buildings to achieve a paper light environment and enhanced, modern working and break out areas
- Work with the OD programme to develop mandatory and optional training around the use of data and maximising business applications and technology
- Work with the OD programme to consider how digital leadership can be incorporated into our leadership values and programmes
- Re-focus member training programmes on the development of digital champions, who can both support the worksmart environment and encourage residents to access digital services
- Investigate options to promote more agile and flexible working including prgorammes for hot desking, home working and bring your own device
- Consider how the digital technology and applications that we purchase can both be maximised to their full potential and support the ambitions of the extension to shared services programme.
- Develop our internal communications to allow staff to access key information and data more easily
- Assess the costs and benefits of cloud-based applications and desktops and consider whether this would be a sustainable option for both councils

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PLACE (Digital Borough)

- Explore funding options to provide further support digital inclusion
- Re-evaluate current digital inclusion provision to assess how support can be targeted to those who most need it
- Work with partners to develop the expansion of digital access points across the boroughs, including in the specific communities where access would be most beneficial
- Develop activities both internally, and with partners, to support the development of digital skills at basic to advanced levels.
- Work with education providers to support businesses in offering digital opportunities to the future workforce
- Develop a scheme to support businesses to partake in the digital economy and make best use of digital innovation
- Work with planning policy to consider how the councils can support the development of digital infrastructure such as broadband and 5G

PEOPLE (Digital Services)

- Identify council services which could be re-designed as digital first and evaluate the quality of current digital services
- Deliver a higher quality of services by following service design principles, ensuring that services are developed with a customer focus
- Consider opportunities to further automate processes and services, including through the use of new and innovative technology such as AI
- Consider opportunities to improve the quality and breadth of service access such as through apps, assistive technology such as smart speakers, and AI automated phone, email and webchat
- Explore funding options to further develop digital services
- Investigate options to encourage customers to use self-service, working with Members, partners, and the community to spread the message of the benefits of digital services, and ensuring that information is targeted to those who most need it
- Work with the OD programme to ensure that training for customer services on new digital processes is focused on how staff can help the customer to access self-service

Data and Intelligence

- Explore opportunities to work with partners to develop data hubs and share information within the appropriate data sharing frameworks
- Consider opportunities to improve data security
- Develop a programme to improve how we collect and store information, identifying opportunities to collect and improve the quality of our data, and reviewing how we can make it easier to find and extract
- Create a programme to improve our use of data and intelligence, including developing the processes, technology and capacity to manage and analyse data, and working with the OD programme to support staff in developing data skills.
- Investigate options to improve the information that is available to residents including creating a single view of the customer, providing real time data about council services, and personalising information to individual residents
- Explore funding options and other external projects and initiatives to help further develop our use of data.

Monitoring

It will be important to monitor the progress of the Joint Digital Strategy to ensure that both councils are improving the services that they offer, are meeting their corporate objectives, and are moving towards an aligned approach,

Performance measures will be developed for each council based on their individual roadmap, and targets will be set based on the current context and performance of each council.

Quarterly reports will be fed into the reporting processes for each council, which will provide an opportunity to recognise progress made, highlight key issues or risks, and ensure that both councils are on track for an aligned approach.