Digital Strategies by London Boroughs: State of Play 2018

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Table of Contents
1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................1
2 Previous work ......................................................................................................................................2
3 Recommendations made in this paper .................................................................................................3
4 Selection of strategies .........................................................................................................................3
5 Themes ................................................................................................................................................7
6 The plans in detail ...............................................................................................................................8
7 Common and divergent approaches to writing the strategies .............................................................12
8 Paths to future borough digital strategies ..........................................................................................16
1 Introduction

This review of London borough digital strategies is part of the evidence base for a new Smart London Plan. The Mayor has charged his Chief Digital Officer, Theo Blackwell, and his Smart London Board to create this new plan in 2018.

This review will help City Hall and the boroughs identify:
- existing digital plans and how they articulated in London
- who drives the creation of boroughs’ plans to collectively enhance their digital leadership;
- know what infrastructure is planned to establish digital foundations across public services;
- know what digital solutions and innovation funds are planned to support joint digital innovation; and
- know what resources are being put in place to plan investment in capacity to consider future innovation.

It will also help boroughs to:
- learn from each other what resources and leadership are needed to make a plan; and
- share what projects and programmes they put in place to meet their corporate and policy goals.

City Hall is focussed on helping boroughs collaborate better with each other and with other public agencies such as Transport for London, the NHS, and the emergency services. To promote greater digital collaboration, together with London Councils it has commissioned a scoping study for a potential London Office of Technology and Innovation (or ‘LOTI’). The core principles of a LOTI are to acknowledge existing leading practice, amplify it across the wider London landscape, to avoid duplication and to pool digital expertise where collaboration can deliver collective benefit.

This report:
- categorises the projects and programmes that boroughs have initiated through their digital strategies
- identifies the responsible member and officer resources in the organisation responsible for creating and implementing the strategy
- describes political and operational context, or the corporate and policy goals, within which the digital strategy was made and is designed to meet
- identifies the time horizon for the strategy, and any plans for successor or child strategies

Definition of a digital strategy

A digital strategy is a plan for focusing and scaling up the benefits to the council, the place, and/or its customers (residents and businesses) of data assets and technology-focused projects and programmes. Digital strategies show how to break down silos between council CIOs and directors of delivery-focused service units to deliver a better digital customer experience and evidence-based policy making.

2 Previous work

This paper is modelled on the working paper Digital Master Planning: An Emerging Strategic Practice in Global Cities written by Dr Anthony Townsend and Dr Stephen Lorimer in 2015. It surveyed plans from eight world cities - New York, Chicago, London, Barcelona, Singapore, Hong Kong, Dublin, and San Francisco, identifying the scope of content addressed in their digital strategies, the process used to develop them, and the overall approach to
implementation chosen. It found that while there is little convergence of methodology, the strategies shared a common set of goals: the amplification of existing investments in infrastructure, government services, and economic development through sustained, incremental innovation in digital technology. Finally, it identified four strategic approaches for action for cities considering digital strategies: facilitative, learning, systems and interventionist.

**Smart London Plan (December 2013)**
This was the past Mayor’s plan that brought together London’s successes in connectivity, infrastructure and the digital economy. For each of seven strategies, 3-5 action steps and 2-3 case studies of ongoing projects were presented: (1) Londoners at the core, (2) with open access to data, (3) leveraging London’s research, technology & creative talent, (4) brought together through networks, (5) to enable London to adapt and grow, (6) and City Hall to better serve Londoners’ needs, (7) offering a ‘smarter’ London experience for all. This plan was made before any of the boroughs’ digital strategies were completed. It was followed soon after by the publication of **Digital Camden** in January 2014.

**A Smarter London Together (2018)**
This is a discussion paper drawn up by the Chief Digital Officer for London and the Smart London Board setting the scene for the development of a new Smart London plan. At London Tech Week in June 2017 the Mayor set out an ambition for London to become the smartest city in the world. He has asked London’s new Chief Digital Officer and the Smart London Board to secure London’s position at the forefront of innovation in smart cities and what is known as advanced urban services. Together they have started a Listening Exercise for a new Smart London Plan until April 2018. This will result in measures for a future, inclusive London in line with mayoral strategies and the London Plan. This will build on past progress and take on board lessons learnt from smart boroughs in London, smart cities in the UK and across the world.

### 3 Recommendations made in this paper

There will be recommendations made in this paper that depend on the directorate or unit chosen to lead the writing and the implementation of the digital strategy. The recommendations will guide a borough chief executive, CIO, or service transformation lead to an approach appropriate for each borough, depending on:

- The borough’s leadership for the implementation
- The borough resources available for implementation;
- The time horizon to the next election; and
- mechanisms being set up by the Mayor for cooperation and collaboration in digital assets and data sharing

### 4 Selection of strategies

The starting point for understanding borough strategies is to understand what the strategies say about their authors’ (and it is important to know who the authors were) vision for the role of data and digital technology for the council, its customers, and the place in the social, economic, and environmental sense. This section explains what digital strategies were selected, why they were included, and how they were analysed. It describes and compares the scope and nature of projects, policies, and programmes proposed across the plans, including primary and secondary common elements as well as the approaches and content unique within each document.
The selection of the digital strategies were made on their being in existence and on what is publicly disclosed. It was decided that these must be called digital strategies and to exclude transformation strategies and ICT strategies that have a different strategic and operational focus. Likewise, digital initiatives contained in corporate and growth strategies were not considered. Data strategies would have been included, but no borough had one.

The following plans were found through:

- A desktop survey of publicly available documents
- A survey of borough Chief Executives and CIOs as part of the London Office of Technology and Innovation if they had a digital strategy (October 2017)
- Borough IT leaders at workshops for the London Office of Technology and Innovation (September to November 2017)
All of the digital strategies were made after the borough elections in 2014 (except for Camden):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digital Camden</td>
<td>January 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Islington</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwich Smart City Strategy</td>
<td>October 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Kingston: Smart Borough</td>
<td>November 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected Ealing</td>
<td>April 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent Digital Strategy</td>
<td>May 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton Digital Transformation</td>
<td>July 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Richmond</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These adopted and public digital strategies sit within an array of ICT, IT, technology, and transformation strategies adopted by the boroughs. There are no fewer than ten digital strategies in boroughs that do not have one that are in preparation for approval by members after the 2018 elections, four current digital strategies that are explicitly due to expire before the 2018 election, three that do not explicitly expire but could be replaced, and two that state that they do not expire until well after 2018. **This means that around half of the 33 London boroughs are due or probably due to adopt a digital strategy in 2018/19.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adopted and public digital strategy</th>
<th>Adopted and public ICT Strategy but no digital strategy planned</th>
<th>Digital strategy proposed / in development</th>
<th>No public document available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brent Digital Strategy</td>
<td>Tower Hamlets ICT Strategy</td>
<td>Harrow Future Council (see existing Harrow Corporate ICT Strategy)</td>
<td>Barking &amp; Dagenham Transformation Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Camden</td>
<td>Merton IT Strategy</td>
<td>Croydon Digital Strategy (see existing Croydon ICT Strategy)</td>
<td>Haringey: A Digital Strategy for the Council and the Borough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Kingston</td>
<td>Bromley ICT Strategy</td>
<td>Havering Digital Strategy</td>
<td>Hillingdon ICT Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected Ealing</td>
<td>Hounslow ICT Strategy</td>
<td>Lewisham Digital Strategy</td>
<td>Hackney (no plans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark Digital Strategy</td>
<td>Newham Digital Strategy</td>
<td>City of London Digital Strategy</td>
<td>City of London (no plans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton Digital Transformation</td>
<td>Waltham Forest Digital Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bexley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Richmond</td>
<td>Wandsworth Digital Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Islington</td>
<td>Westminster Digital Strategy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redbridge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Themes

The plans varied significantly in their focus and breadth. Camden had the most number of initiatives, at 37, with Brent’s 27 the next highest number, and Southwark the least at 18. Kingston had by far the highest number associated with e-government, and Ealing the most associated with digital connectivity and collaboration (through data sharing and common standards). Brent had the highest number of initiatives that supported local tech firms, and Southwark the highest number dedicated to citizen engagement and customer experience. Islington had the widest ‘spread’ of initiatives, with only 21 initiatives but all but one area covered. Only Camden had any cybersecurity initiatives, through several strategies mention security. Greenwich concentrated on urban infrastructure in its smart city strategy. The results were expected as the wide range of emphases reflect the independence of the boroughs. The older (2014) and the newest (2017) strategies tend to have more breadth, but the recent (2015-16) strategies tend to specialise in a theme and leave out others.

13 themes emerged clearly from the plans. These themes describe distinct applications of digital technologies by boroughs in digital public service delivery, promoting economic development, and good urban planning. These themes include, for example, expanding internet access for businesses, homes, and public spaces, along with improved digital skills and connectivity. Others focused on the promotion, incubation and nurturing of technology-based innovation and economic development is another theme. Other initiatives focused on innovation in delivery of public services, involving the tech sector, and openness in council operations. Many initiatives may touch on multiple themes, but each initiative was assigned to the most relevant category.

Themes covered included:

- E-government
- Promoting the local IT industry
- Citizen engagement / customer experience
- Open data and/or city data
- Collaboration (Data sharing / common standards)
- IT Infrastructure
- Digital connectivity infrastructure
- Internet access
- IT skill capacity
- Digital inclusion and digital skills
- Cybersecurity
- Urban infrastructure
6 The plans in detail

The following section provides a summary of the content of the plans. In order to ease understanding, a moniker for the plan has been chosen to ease understanding of each plan’s approach, aims, and voice. The moniker does not mean that a borough’s plan excludes other issues. All the plans generally cover the bases of digital transformation, supporting the tech sector, innovation, addressing digital exclusion and engagement, improving connectivity, and digital skills in the community and in the council’s workforce.

The description of each plan in turn follows below. It will cover: 1) what it is notable for 2) some examples to show why 3) the number of initiatives 4) how the plan is organised 5) its timescales for delivery 6) how it measures progress and 7) its plans for implementation and/or responding to the borough’s challenges or priorities.

**Brent Digital Strategy - The Corporate Enabling Plan**

The Brent Digital Strategy is most notable for focusing on how the digital strategy enables its corporate strategy through efficient and value for money services to support amplifying its local places. Examples include using the internet of things (IoT) to respond to local priorities including lighting and waste management and gathering data on those at-risk to intensive social care. It organises its 35 initiatives around corporate categories of demand management, regeneration, employment and skills, business and housing growth, and raising income. The plan timescale is short, but it is novel because it is scheduled to end in the middle of councillors’ 2018 - 2022 term in 2020. Measurement of progress is only promised at the end of the plan in 2020, with
little detail on intermediate steps along the way. The focus on finding new ways of providing services using digital channels is in keeping with the corporate plan’s priorities of better locally, better place, and better lives.

**Digital Camden - the IT collaboration plan**

Digital Camden focuses on how to join up IT systems and collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, from tech developers to other parts of the public sector. Examples include a ‘radical open systems platform’ that gives the council flexibility in its IT systems to respond to demand and working collaboratively with other councils to disrupt the market in public sector software solutions. It does use this flexibility to spread 47 initiatives across all the primary themes, the only plan to be able to do so. The plan’s timescale is unique because it was released five months before the 2014 borough elections to cover the time up to the 2018 election. The plan committed to performance dashboards in priority service areas (which were already being delivered in 2013) and more general start and end dates for delivery of each initiative. The focus on how to deliver through collaboration is reflected in one of the plan’s main chapters, *working in partnership to deliver the Digital Strategy* that includes initiatives that require low resources such as crowdsourcing and hackathons to high resource initiatives in public sector collaboration.

**Greenwich Smart City Strategy - the internationalist Plan**

The Greenwich Smart City Strategy focuses on how to draw from UK and international best practice to be a ‘learning organisation’ to be evidence-based, outcomes driven, and willing to share. Examples that the plan wishes to learn from include how a local businesses such as Crowdvision modelled pedestrian movement in Mecca during the Hajj to how Santander, Spain built a city cloud operations centre. As a result, its 32 initiatives concentrated around supporting the IT sector locally and building urban infrastructure, reflected in the strategy’s themes of smart neighbourhoods and communities, infrastructure for change, an innovative and smart council, and economic growth and high value jobs. The plan was adopted at a time standard for public authorities (coming around halfway through of a political term in late 2015), but it lacks timescales for its commitments with the notable exception of a commitment for a council digital transformation roadmap in Q2 2016 that hasn’t been adopted as of February 2018. It has many concrete proposals to mark progress against, such as an urban innovation/solutions platform and an innovation fund. The focus on being internationalist is reflected in its own definition of a smart city as one that is informed by leading international experience and digital infrastructure that is globally competitive.

**Digital Kingston - the human plan through technology**

Digital Kingston devotes most of its thinking to improving digital interaction between customers and partners with the council. Examples of concrete projects include creating an assistive technology service and a community mobilisation platform. Most of its 32 initiatives were focused in the area of e-government organised around digitally enabled borough, community, and workforce. There are some ambitions in connectivity, innovation, and city data value as part of their smart borough programme without clear projects to deliver. The plan was adopted at the end of 2017 with timescales to finish by the end of 2017 (and before the next election in May 2018). There is no mechanism to mark progress, but there are some projects to complete as intermediate steps such as market engagement and embedding a digital by default approach. The focus on digital communications is reflected in its identified challenges of digital participation, customer experience, and digital engagement.

**Connected Ealing - the resources plan**

Connected Ealing is plainspoken about its drivers - rising demand, rising expectations, and fewer resources ([see the ‘graph of doom’ in the LGA Future Funding outlook](https://www.lga.co.uk)). Examples include
using data analytics to create the intelligence to target services, improve outcomes and tackle fraud and using customer insight to identify need, reduce customer demand, resolve failures and pro-actively deliver services. However, this does not mean a totally internally-driven plan as its 31 initiatives are spread across all the categories organised around actions for a digital customer, council, and place. They are collated as actions at the end of the document with an implementation plan for completion from 2017 to 2021. There is no mechanism to mark progress, but there is a promise of a detailed implementation plan that will, for example, identify dependent actions. The focus on resources is reflected in its detailed implementation plan for using data to improve services, widening access and tackling exclusion, saving money where needed most, and growing the economy.

**Southwark Digital Strategy - the short-term digital inclusion-first plan**

The Southwark Digital Strategy is plan that commits to improving digital interaction and digital inclusion between customers and partners with the council - within a few months of publication in 2017. Examples include a proposal for a single digital health service platform and creating a single customer view. Out of its 18 initiatives, most were in the themes of citizen engagement and increasing digital skills of citizens and council staff organised around digital borough and digital council. However, initiatives around resources available, connectivity, and using data to improve service delivery were present. It was had very short-term progress goals - it was published in February 2016 with next steps to be completed by the end of the summer 2016. There wasn’t a clear method for assessing progress, which is understandable given the short timescales. The focus on customer interaction and digital inclusion is reflected in its four digital principles around customer-centric services, organisational culture, inclusive benefits, and service improvement.

**Sutton Digital Transformation - the digital transformation-first plan**

Sutton Digital Transformation is focused on digital transformation of council services and communication with customers and partners of the council. Examples include a customer relationship management system, a content management system and a shared view of resident data with council partners. Out of its 19 initiatives, around half were in the themes of customer experience or data sharing organised around digitally inclusive/self service, people and business focused, engagement using digital platforms, and resilience. Included in the strategy are commitments for digital infrastructure in public spaces and libraries and crowdfunding platforms. There are no timeframes for completing the strategy or ways to assess progress included. The focus on digital transformation is reflected in the how of the document: working with colleagues, enhancing the customer experience, and working with partners.

**Digital Richmond - the all-around, pre-election plan**

Digital Richmond is focused around setting an all-around digital agenda and getting results before the next election in May 2018. Examples include a digital impact assessment and creating a borough innovation fund. The plan was one of the few to have all its 25 initiatives spread across all the primary themes, with the most initiatives in customer experience and data sharing. These were organised around digital first, digital connectivity, digital customer, and digital borough. Included in the strategy were initiatives on not-spots and hosting an annual digital summit. The plan had the shortest timescales - it was released in December 2017 with all deadlines for completion in April 2018. The next council election is in May 2018. There wasn’t a clear method for assessing progress, which is understandable given the short timescales. The focus on an all-around digital agenda is reflected in the challenges the plan identifies in increased demands and expectations, reduced resources, quality connectivity, digital exclusion, and digital skills of the workforce.
**Digital Islington - the ‘sufficient progress’ plan**

The Digital Islington plan is unique because it has the firmest method for assessing ‘sufficient progress’ of all of the digital strategies included in this survey. Examples include scales where the council can assess progress towards 80% online transactions and how cutting-edge technologies procured should be whilst being reliable. The plan was one of the few to have all its 21 initiatives spread across all the primary themes, with the most initiatives in workforce digital skills and data sharing. These were organised around the themes of digital customer service, digital workforce, digital place, and digital collaboration. The plan was particularly concerned about the skills of its workforce to deliver the other parts of the strategy. It was adopted quickly after the 2014 elections to run until 2017 - almost to the end of the term of the borough councillors. The method for assessing progress was realistically qualitative rather than quantitative, and the use of scales to show where the council is and where it wants to be at the end of the term was unique and useful. The focus on progress is reflected in its description of how, including what the vision is, where the council is now, and how the vision will be achieved.
### 7 Common and divergent approaches to writing the strategies

This section describes the processes by which digital strategies were initiated and conducted in several of the cities discussed earlier. All of the material assessed above is publicly available.
However, the process by which non-statutory plans were developed was typically internal to the organisation without the same requirements for public consultation. There are, however, several common threads and discontinuities that can be found:

First, almost all the plans have strong political sponsorship. For the most part, these are political documents produced to emphasise the council’s commitment to digital transformation, digital inclusion, and/or the borough as a smart place/city. Most of the plans, for example Camden, have engaged service directors, procurement officers, and economic development officers in their development. However, these are not the same kind of consensus document across all cabinet members and the senior management team seen in a corporate strategy or a statutory borough plan.

Second, the timescales vary, but they can be grouped into two groups. Digital strategies with medium-term timescales (Camden, Islington in 2014, Ealing, Brent in 2017) tended to be developed near the end of a political cycle with moderate requests for resources. Those developed with short-term commitments for an update (Kingston, Southwark) were in the middle of the political cycle (2016), focused on short-term communication and inclusion with modest asks for resources. There are couple of exceptions: Greenwich (2015) was developed at the beginning of the term with an open-ended timescale to make long-term commitments and moderate needs for the creation of Digital Greenwich. Richmond (2017) was developed at the end of a political cycle with very short-term commitments with modest asks for resources.

Third, the way that each digital strategy was organised can generally be categorised into three areas of focus: place, council, and customer. It was interesting that these three ‘pillars’ are found throughout all the ‘generations’ of plans from 2014 (Islington) to 2017 (Richmond). The main exceptions are Camden and Greenwich, who had the largest ask of resources from their boroughs to implement their plans in 2014 and 2015.

Fourth, the plans tended to identify the boroughs’ challenges as the same: rising demand, rising expectations, and fewer resources. Digital strategies frequently refer back to the ‘graph of doom’ first published by the LGA in 2013 to give a sense of urgency for action. Words such as business intelligence and demand management are used often to describe the challenges of high transaction quality and quantity. The cost of online transactions versus face to face and telephone transactions is oft-quoted by councils based on outside research, and varied:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Face-to-face</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camden (2014)</td>
<td>£13.86</td>
<td>£3.86</td>
<td>32p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington (2015)</td>
<td>£7.40</td>
<td>not reported</td>
<td>32p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark (2016)</td>
<td>£10.53</td>
<td>£3.00</td>
<td>8p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing (2017)</td>
<td>£8.62</td>
<td>£2.83</td>
<td>15p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifth, implementation plans and more detailed progress marking of plans are often mentioned, but were rarely delivered. Ambition to produce more within the next months have never been fulfilled. Examples include Ealing (2017) committing to a detailed implementation plan, Southwark (2016) declared itself a live document and implied that it would be amended after meeting that year’s commitments. Islington (2014) had the most ambitious plan to measure
progress at the end of the plan in 2017, but with the 2018 election looming, an update is understandably unlikely.

Finally, there was a connection between the sponsoring politician and the responsibilities of those charged with implementation. the most common portfolio of the sponsoring politician is from finance and/or performance, and the most common implementation team is from digital or service transformation (Camden, Kingston, Southwark, Islington and in Sutton’s case, sponsored by its Chief Executive). Of course, there are always exceptions. In Ealing and Greenwich, the sponsoring politician was the council leader, and charged new organisational transformation and a council-owned company with implementation. In Brent, the deputy leader sponsored the plan with a digital board responsible for implementation. In Richmond, a new cabinet position for digital and a senior manager is to be made Chief Digital Officer to implement. It was difficult to find a pattern in resource ask and timescales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Sponsoring Politician</th>
<th>Responsibility for Implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brent (2017)</td>
<td>Deputy leader</td>
<td>The Brent Digital Board is chaired by the Director of Performance, Policy and Partnerships – the digital lead for the Corporate Management Team – and its membership includes the Strategic Director of Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden (2014)</td>
<td>Cabinet Member for Finance</td>
<td>A customer insight team focused on using feedback and data from our residents and businesses to drive Council service improvement and ensure services are responsive to customers; A cross-cutting technology team specialising in business intelligence, agile working, channel shift and joined-up working who work with services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenwich (2015)</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Drive and coordination will be delivered by Digital Greenwich, a team focused on developing a smarter Greenwich, which will report to the CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston (2016)</td>
<td>Director of Finance</td>
<td>Our Kingston is the Council’s innovative transformation programme building on the borough’s shared services experience with Sutton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ealing (2017)</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Future Ealing is our response. It is an organisational approach which will ensure that we focus on the outcomes that matter most to our community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwark (2016)</td>
<td>Cabinet Member for Finance, Change and Performance</td>
<td>Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation are leading digital transformation for the organisation. The Transformation team (in Housing and Modernisation), will coordinate organisation wide digital change as a Digital Transformation Programme whilst providing support and expertise to design and implement digital service improvements, realise efficiency savings and improve customer experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutton (2017)</td>
<td>Chief Executive</td>
<td>The Digital programme (e-Volve) will coordinate organisation-wide digital change as a Digital Transformation Programme whilst providing support and governance in design and implementation of digital service improvements, tangible efficiency savings and improved customer experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond (2017)</td>
<td>Lead Cabinet Member for Digital and Technology</td>
<td>Designate a senior manager as the Council’s Chief Digital Officer to mirror the new Cabinet Member with a remit to develop and embed our approach; Establish a new cross cutting Digital and Technology Board consisting of senior managers from across the organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are some lessons that can be learnt?

- Political sponsorship and commitments for organisational change is as important as knowing which officer(s) or board(s) are responsible for delivery.
- Timescales can vary significantly, but are not as important as having clear deadlines that come before the end of the time period of the plan. Without these, it is difficult to robustly test out goals.
- Boroughs have converged on the same goals for data and digital technologies as a cross-cutting issue for the place, council, and customer. However, that convergence is coinciding with a general tightening of resources available for implementation.
- Boroughs have converged on the same challenges: rising demand, rising expectations, and fewer resources. But alignment on quantitative measures of performance such as cost of transactions surprisingly hard to come by.
- The digital strategy is an accomplishment in itself, but resources cannot all shift to implementation. As tech is fast-moving, these strategies need consistent resources to keep them current. Digital strategies often promise updates to ‘live’ documents and detail on implementation.

8 Paths to future borough digital strategies

Digital strategies have led to measurable, positive outcomes for boroughs. Given the limited number of years available to evaluate track records, and the lack of measurement of progress by boroughs, it is far too early only four years after the first digital strategy to make decisive recommendations. However, the approaches and implementation plans found in borough strategies in London are worth adapting in new strategies. This is especially important to think of now and after the 2018 borough elections, where around half of the boroughs are due to produce a new digital strategy in 2018/19.

The recommendations consist of four distinct paths for boroughs considering a digital strategy. These are called gathering, shifting, cultural, and collaborative. Despite convergence around the goals and the challenges, here is no single way of making a digital strategy. Boroughs need to consider their givens - timescales for implementation (and evaluation), the available (and decreasing) resources, and leadership for implementation — and then write a strategy that leans towards one approach or another. It’s also important to understand that these approaches are merely midpoints in a spectrum. In practice, boroughs will need blend elements of multiple approaches.
Path 1 - Gathering

The gathering approach, which is most successful in resource-scarce situations with short-term demands for results, focuses on collating initiatives that can build off activities already taking place. Typically, the best lead for implementing this approach is a group or board of senior managers, as the gathering approach is well-suited to sharing knowledge ‘shallow and wide’ within the council and with the market, especially SMEs that rarely engage with bidding for council services. This will enable the borough to identify departments and officers that can learn good practice from each other and combine data from different services for the first time. The gathering approach is good for showing short-term progress (e.g. less than half of an election cycle) because the scoping process uncovers technologies that are either being made available by the market or already being implemented by the borough without any central coordination. This means that minimal resources are needed in money and staff because the gathering approach effectively coordinates and reports technology commitments and shows commitment of leadership without needing to build up a knowledge base deep enough to make new long-term commitments.

Path 2 - Shifting

In the shifting approach, the best lead is in borough services, as it is best for leveraging knowledge from a wide number of people to test shifts in communication and transaction between borough, place, and customer. The delivery of these projects is dependent on enough resources to manage borough-to-borough and borough-to-private partnerships and leveraging data to improve performance of the service. It is a useful approach to show progress in the medium-term because reporting successes and failures of shifts uncovers data and analytics available to service providers. The establishment and procurement of products with common data standards and data sharing platforms will improve service performance. In time, these standards can be leveraged into a more favorable procurement market for digital services at less cost for boroughs. At the same time, they will inject more confidence in boroughs and open up investment by tech SMEs in digital public services. This will require time to build up the organisation’s knowledge base - to make ‘a digital organisation’ with the confidence to make longer-term commitments.
**Path 3 - Cultural**

The cultural approach is well-suited to help all parts of the organisation learn about the benefits of data and digital technologies before procurement kicks in. Generally, this requires a higher level of resources than other short-term payoff paths. In this approach, the best lead for the plan is in the area of project management (or organisational change unit), as the cultural approach is best for focusing on internal borough issues that need to get resolved before procuring systems and technologies. Delivery is dependent on a medium level of resources to invest in future digital, data and IoT systems by the borough. It is a useful approach to show progress in the short-term because a borough can focus on what improvements it can make and deliver. In time, these technologies and projects in the public sector can be leveraged into borough-to-borough and borough-to-private partnerships in future revisions. This means that there long-term commitments are envisioned but there are clear steps that need to be done internally to show progress before embarking on a more ambitious implementation plan.

**Path 4 - Collaborative**

The collaborative approach needs a long-term, living strategy for a borough and links borough-to-borough collaborations to aggregate demand and amplify investment. In this approach, the best lead for the plan is a specialised project team, as a consistent, moderate level of investment is required. Resources are needed to make investments at all stages of a technology’s lifecycle, from R&D to testing to rollout of common standards and approaches. It is a useful approach for long-term borough strategies because investment payback will take longer than a full election cycle. Borough-to-borough collaborations in technologies can be leveraged into procuring more substantial borough-to-borough and private sector data and technology collaborations to test assumptions made in the strategy. By testing, collaborations can be dropped and added, making strategies ‘living’ and ‘linked’ documents. If there are moderate resources available and the borough commits, and gets other boroughs to commit, to savings and benefits in the long-term, handing the lead to a specialised project team and implementing the collaborative approach is the best path for a borough strategy.

**Closing**

In closing, it is important to note that the Mayor is working on a collaborative model for those who wish to go down that path. A new London Office for Technology & Innovation (LOTI), is intended to promote collaboration in digital transformation in London government. The core principles of a LOTI are to acknowledge existing leading practice, amplify it across the wider London landscape, to avoid duplication and to pool expertise where collaboration can deliver collective benefit. It should do this through a programme designed to collectively enhance digital leadership; establish digital foundations across public services; support measures to improve joint digital innovation; and invest in capacity to consider future innovation. This was presented to the Chief Executives’ London Committee for their consideration in January 2018.