

UK Digital Strategy

local government and digital transformation



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UK Digital Strategy – local government and digital transformation

1. Introduction

Camden Council, the MJ Digital City of the Year 2015/16, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the next UK Digital Strategy. Through the delivery of our Digital Strategy we've transformed council services saving millions of pounds, enabled cross sector working to tackle inequality and achieve better outcomes for our most vulnerable residents as well as supporting the growth of our local economy. We aim to realise digital opportunities through partnership working with local businesses, schools, health, HE / FE institutions as well as other agencies including the Greater London Authority (GLA). Camden's achievements, set out in our response to the UK Digital Strategy, demonstrate the critical and positive role that councils can and must play in delivering the new approach.

Overall, we agree that a new UK Digital Strategy cannot be a narrowly focused strategy about moving government services online. We believe it's about enabling the transformation of government, business and society for the better. This is how we have approached digital in the borough and our ambitions are set out in our Digital Strategy

<http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/council-and-democracy/camden-plan/strategies-and-partnerships/digital-strategy/>

In contrast to the previous government Digital Strategy, local government must be recognised as integral to the delivery of the next one, enabling cross government transformation, economic growth and making everyday lives easier. Whitehall should empower local government to:

- See digital transformation and interoperability as a necessary part of devolution deals and help develop local digital plans to integrate local and regional digital developments across the locality to accelerate progress, synergise investment and eliminate digital exclusion;
- Lead the development of an interoperability framework that enables data sharing and end to end process automation across local and central government;
- Play a full and participatory role in the development and rollout of Government as a Platform (GaaP) including, for example, Verify to deliver better services for citizens and business.



2. Transforming Government

We believe that the challenge is not primarily about interacting with government. Rather, it is about putting citizens and businesses at the heart of government so we not only reduce transaction costs but achieve better outcomes. Within Camden we've achieved a transformation in government through technology innovation by focusing on:

- (I) enhancing workforce digital capability;
- (II) improving online channels;
- (III) harnessing the use of advanced analytics; and
- (IV) developing a “joined-up” view of resident data. We have linked up our digital delivery with key partners including the Camden Clinical Commissioning Group, Public Health and Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC).

2.1. Making Government Transactions Seamless & Simple

We have transformed interactions with the Town Hall by providing a single and integrated point of access to services through our online Camden Account. We have focused on improving the usability of services by co-designing new services with our residents. Rather than automate existing processes we have re-engineered services as diverse as planning and housing repairs using systems thinking. We have fundamentally changed the way we deliver IT solutions by moving from closed proprietary systems to open and interoperable platforms that share data and enable end to end automation of service delivery. In designing this new approach, we have worked with IT suppliers and Crown Commercial Services to encourage suppliers to develop software that is more flexible and standards based.

As a result of the activities above we have, for example, developed online parking permits system with our residents that's simple to use and has real time integration with our Council Tax system to validate residency as well as an external provider to confirm vehicle ownership information. Together, these digital innovations in parking have led to a 30% reduction in telephone calls to our call centre.

Similarly, by linking our internal IT systems with the Post Office, Camden residents and businesses are now able to make payments at any local Post Office. This has enabled the Council to close its expensive face-to-face access points, provide a transition for digitally excluded residents at a time of change as well as supporting the high street.

The formulation of a new UK Digital Strategy provides an exciting opportunity to integrate and join up cross government digital developments so they deliver a seamless, low cost and citizen centric approach across a wide range of services. However, in our view, much more must be done to incubate and accelerate interoperability across government and this cannot be done in a piecemeal way. With the imminent closure of the Digital Partnership Programme in Department for Communities and Local Government there is not an obvious way of connecting up central and local government digital developments whilst this continues to be outside the remit of the Government Digital Service.

2.2. Developing a Digital Skills Framework

Our Digital Strategy includes a focus on embedding digital into the organisation at every level and includes a requirement in larger change programmes to redesign services rather than automate existing processes using systems thinking as well as embracing agile approaches to focus on co-designing solutions with residents and customers.

As part of our approach to transformation we have developed a strong internal digital capability which enables Camden to mirror the role locally that GDS plays in central government. Part of that has involved radically redesigning our IT Service around four digital centres of excellence embracing workforce transformation, channel-shift, analytics and open data. All involve multi-agency working so we have the skills and technical leadership capacity to enable transformation across local public services.

2.3. Workforce Transformation

We have made the development of a digital workforce a priority within Camden's Digital Strategy. To date, we have boosted productivity and enabled flexible working by removing over 22km of paper from the council, adopting digital communication technology and moving to collaboration platforms. This has saved the council millions of pounds per annum, generated a capital receipt in excess of £10m and supported the construction of an award winning civic building that serves both our community and our Council's needs. It has also enabled us to support flexible working patterns for our workforce, particularly parents.

2.4. Harnessing Analytics and Open Data

Camden has also prioritised the development of open data to support transformation and greater democratic accountability. We have recently published an Open Data Charter which commits the Council to publishing all its information on line and this has ensured that we are one of the biggest local government publishers on data.gov.uk. More importantly the development of our open data strategy is driving innovation. For example, the publication of Statutory Notices is a time consuming and manual process. However, by publishing planning applications on our open data platform we can now automatically generate alerts to residents who have asked to be kept informed of developments in their area.

2.5. Incentivising Open Systems

Shared services, multi-agency working and devolution have a much greater chance of success where there is an accompanying step change in the quality of digital solutions developed for government. To date, the majority of solutions sold to government have focused on suppliers 'locking-in' customers to proprietary IT solutions that do not easily share information and prevent collaboration. This has driven up costs and made it very difficult to achieve data sharing and cross sector process automation.

The proprietary nature of legacy applications within government must be tackled. Part of the answer lies in changing supplier behaviour. Camden has played a leadership role nationally with Crown Commercial Services and the LGA to embed a requirement for more flexible and open systems in new national procurement frameworks for suppliers. This includes, for example, requiring suppliers on government frameworks to publish their Application Program Interfaces (APIs).

Transforming Government recommendations for the UK Digital Strategy:

Recommendation 1: The UK Digital Strategy should consider how and in what form the work of the Digital Partnership Programme is continued. The London Borough of Camden is willing to play a leading role in this.

Recommendation 2: Proposals for government transformation must incorporate workforce transformation, use of analytics, channel shift as well 'joined-up' data across local and central government. We recommend that a wider culture and change programme, including the development of a strong internal digital capability, is integral to the successful delivery of a UK Digital Strategy and should be fostered and encouraged as part of government transformation.

Recommendation 3: The digitisation of the workforce and elimination of paper within government should be a central priority to achieve the step change in service delivery.

Recommendation 4: We believe that the publication and sharing of local authority data online needs to be a continuing focus and priority for a new UK Digital Strategy.

Recommendation 5: The UK Digital Strategy must set out a clear and funded plan to ensure that local government has the capacity to support an ambitious and cross government UK strategy. Specifically:

- resource a local government architectural practice that provides technical and thought leadership to support interoperability across government as well as fostering collaboration across councils; and
- accelerate the development of standards and Application Program Interfaces (APIs) that facilitate data exchange across IT systems in government;
- further incentivise the IT software and services market, through government sponsored commercial and procurement strategies, to deliver interoperable technology platforms and encourage the level of data exchange that is necessary to enable government transformation.



3. Unlocking Growth

Camden is unlocking growth by fostering digital skills, proactively stimulating connectivity and developing an on line Business Account to provide a single point of access to council services that is particularly beneficial to new start-ups and Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Much of this work has been undertaken with the Camden Business Board which is a representative group of local business leaders supporting the co-ordination of activities across the borough to enable local businesses to grow and thrive.

3.1. Improving Connectivity (Fixed Line, Wireless and Mobile)

We have supported, and worked closely with the GLA, to promote the super-connected cities initiative. This has contributed to Camden achieving the third highest take-up of broadband vouchers in the capital. To incubate public wireless access in the capital Camden led a consortium of 16 London Local Authorities to establish a concession contract that created a new network that is used by thousands of people in the Borough every month.

In October 2015 Camden's Cabinet agreed a ground breaking initiative (known as 'digital rooftops') to increase competition, accelerate mobile broadband and telecommunications infrastructure on the rooftops of housing and council buildings. This ground breaking initiative is forecast to generate a receipt in excess of £6m over the next 10 years. Some of this much needed income will be reinvested back into council estates to tackle digital exclusion. It will also provide much needed capacity for local businesses, residents and visitors to the borough.

3.2. Protecting workspace

On the 30 May 2013, the government changed planning rules (permitted development) to introduce

the right to change permanently from office use to residential use without the need for planning permission. The rights applied to the whole borough except Camden's part of the Central Activities Zone (CAZ), for which the Council secured an exemption. The Council considers that these rights have harmful social, economic and amenity impacts and restrict its ability to properly plan for the borough and promote economic growth.

Article 4 Directions were brought into force by the Council on 19th October 2015 for certain parts of the borough where withdrawing the right to change from office to residential use (without formal grant of planning permission) was considered expedient on planning grounds.

Camden strongly objects to the proposal for the offices to residential permitted development right to become permanent from May 2016, including the removal of previously exempted areas. Evidence has shown that the permitted development right is having significant adverse effects on businesses in Camden and other parts of London.

3.3. Lifelong skills

We welcome the focus on lifelong commitment to developing digital and this has been a focus of the Digital Strategy. We have ensured that our Adult Learning Offer includes the promotion of skills for the digitally excluded and we continue to provide over 300 public IT systems that are connected to the internet.

Camden has sponsored Coding Clubs in schools providing young local people with programming skills essential for future employability. Working in partnership with Google and University College London (UCL), around 75% of schools are either with an active club or seeking volunteer partners. All our secondary schools have after

school computing opportunities and the student experience is complemented by information about careers, training to develop digital leaders and we are building a “Maker Community” on Saturdays to provide a space to put their learning into practice. Camden’s ability to co-ordinate responses to the new Computing curriculum was assisted by Camden’s continuing support for the City Learning Centre at Regent’s High School, Somers Town. This local Computing at School hub has been invaluable in linking schools together, developing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for ICT teachers and linking primary and secondary schools with businesses and University College London (UCL).

3.3. Crowdfunding

We are pioneering technology solutions that are helping us to explore how to bridge the financial divide between Camden’s thriving economy and some of Camden’s poorest communities through a partnership with the SpaceHive crowdfunding platform. The Camden Hive is a hyperlocal crowdfunding offer which provides our local communities with a digital mechanism for tapping into the borough’s wider resources to help strengthen the resilience of our residents.

We believe that crowdfunding and social media platforms can and should form a vital local digital infrastructure to help build local resilience and support businesses succeed.

Through our work with local businesses we identified a requirement to improve our online offer by developing a Camden Business Account. Today, over 3500 businesses in Camden are signed up to our Camden Business Account which provides a single point of access to services including business rates, commercial waste and key information for start-ups.

Unlocking Growth recommendations for the UK Digital Strategy

Recommendation 6: The UK Digital Strategy needs to continue focusing on accelerating superfast connectivity which is particularly poor within inner London as well as incubating the rollout of next generation mobile and telecommunications connectivity to enable ubiquitous access to the internet and greater competition. Central and local public service estate should be used to boost connectivity, following Camden’s ‘digital rooftops’ initiative.

Recommendation 7: More should be done by government to increase transparency regarding the performance of telecommunications providers so there is more accountability for poor performance.

Recommendation 8: The dominant market position of a small number of big suppliers should be reviewed to see whether more can be done to encourage competition and accelerate high speed access to internet service.

Recommendation 9: The government should review the impact of Permitted Development (PD) rights due to their negative impact on employment space in tech clusters like Camden and inner London. If the Permitted Development (PD) right is to continue it should be amended so that:

- areas such as Camden with large numbers of office premises in important growth sectors throughout their areas should be exempt;
- it only applies to genuinely vacant premises.

Recommendation 10: To develop talent in the long-term, the Department for Education and devolved administrations should promote school-based Computing hubs to address teacher shortages in Computing and STEM subjects.



4. Improving Everyday lives Growth

Within our Digital Strategy we believe that we can improve lives by ensuring that no one is left behind and we don't have a digital divide. We believe that everyone's lives are better when service delivery within the Council and its partners is "joined-up". Therefore, as part of the Digital Strategy we've been working closely with health to link up and share information to deliver better outcomes.

4.1. Ensuring no-one gets left behind

There must be a fundamental requirement to ensure that the next UK Digital Strategy is inclusive and harnesses technology innovation for the benefit of all. There is a strong case for doing so. The bulk of government spending is on vulnerable citizens and the costs associated with meeting complex needs.

Camden has embedded digital inclusion into mainstream delivery in several ways. For example, as part of the project to accelerate mobile telecommunications across the Borough we have secured agreement to use a proportion of that income to reinvest back into housing estates to aid digital inclusion through free wifi in 74 tenants' halls and targeted inclusion support.

4.2. Shared Services & Multi Agency Working

To enable multi-agency and shared service delivery we believe that government must prioritise linking up its information and improving data sharing arrangements. There are major benefits to this approach.

The Camden Resident Index brings together data across 16 different systems to provide a "single view" of our customers' interactions with the Council. This has enabled us to improve our

safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable children by alerting us to changes in family circumstances, save money by spotting fraud and streamline processes such as electoral roll registration as we can very quickly identify and address gaps. As part of the general election voter registration we were able to spot gaps in the electoral roll and speed up registration either by automatic enrolment or contacting residents proactively. We were also one of the first councils in the country to populate our social care systems with NHS numbers so we could join up service delivery.

4.3. Smart Cities

We are witnessing massive growth in the number of devices in the public realm such as parking bay sensors, smart meters, air pollution monitors and movement sensors in the home.

Camden was one of the first Councils in the country to rollout smart meters. Working with industry partners and behaviour scientists we quickly identified that smart meters in themselves didn't lead to less consumption and a lower carbon footprint but the fact that residents found out they were spending more than their neighbours. Alongside this a whole new wave of service innovation is being driven through the digitisation of our lives with cars, health monitors and mobile phones providing vast amounts of information that offer fundamentally different and disruptive ways of delivering services.

Improving Everyday lives recommendations for the UK Digital Strategy

Recommendation 11: minimise digital exclusion, improve community resilience and support earlier and better targeted interventions across agencies to save money and deliver better outcomes.

Recommendation 12: We believe that priority should be given to developing an integrated and joined-up view of key datasets across government including residents, the NHS and other local public services and businesses.

Recommendation 13: Fundamentally review statute and regulation in respect of information and data handling in government so it enables and supports public service transformation. The UK's approach to digital privacy, data sharing and security needs have developed organically that has / is contributing to confusion and unnecessary complexity on key issues such as Information Governance and data sharing.



5. Building Foundations

5.1. Cyberthreats

We recognise the importance of cybersecurity. Camden has invested significantly to ensure the resilience, security and continuous operation of its applications and systems. This should rightly remain a priority for the UK Digital Strategy.

In terms of information security there needs to be a proportionate approach. In the past, a one size fits all approach to government security on the Public Services Network (PSN) constrained councils, added costs and stood in the way of efficient service delivery. Our approach in Camden has been based on risk with more stringent measures being applied to more sensitive data.

5.2. Common Technology Solutions & Demand Aggregation

We support the delivery of common infrastructure and components to drive down costs. We believe that the Public Services Network (PSN) should continue as it delivers necessary trust and security to the provision of government services. However, it needs to be repositioned to the delivery of shared services and new models of delivery. As such government should stimulate the development of shared services and cloud solutions within the Public Services Network (PSN).

Based on regional and national procurement work there are significant opportunities to achieve economies of scale and knowledge through the aggregation of demand. This includes the acceleration of shared services and regional approaches to digital.

Building Foundations recommendations for the UK Digital Strategy

Recommendation 14: We believe a risk-based approach is the right one for cybersecurity as opposed to a one size fits all model which has led to issues within local government.

Recommendation 15: The work undertaken by the LGA, local government and Crown Commercial Services has had a positive impact on both the costs and the quality of IT solutions. Going forward, the partnership working on commercial strategy must continue.

Conclusion

We are grateful for the opportunity to set out the challenges and opportunities for a new UK Digital Strategy. As a leader and pioneer in the delivery of digital government we believe that our learning and insights can help transform government, build long term foundations, unlock growth and help everyday lives. Indeed, our track record demonstrates the significant impact that councils can play in the delivery of digital government. We would very much welcome an opportunity to discuss our response further.

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