

## Local Government Digital Alliance: purpose and terms of reference

### Background

Following the local government digital summit on 4 March 2013 we have been discussing, with LGA and other sector partners, establishing a local government digital alliance. The aim of the alliance will be to support the local government sector to design and deliver local public services that offer value for money and are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by maximising the opportunities presented by digital tools.

### Local Digital Alliance purpose

- Creating sector wide leadership and strategic appreciation of the benefits for providing digitally enabled services;
- Joining up and support strong local authority input into relevant Government Digital Strategy exemplar service transformation programmes;
- Promoting Digital by Default so that those customers who are happy to do so interact with their council via well designed and marketed digital channels;
- Supporting those citizens and businesses who are not currently using digital services to transition to them as soon as possible; but providing assisted digital access through traditional channels where they remain unable to do so independently;
- Maximise the potential of digital, including roll out of super-fast broadband and ensuring high quality education and training, to support local economic growth;
- Enabling collaboration with a range of partners including the private, voluntary and community sectors, to support the development and implementation of digital solutions, and;
- Developing a sector wide approach which fosters the sharing of good practice and learning.

To achieve this, the alliance will bring together the resources, skills and influence developed through its different member organisations, professional bodies and other partners – to enable greater collaboration and alignment so that the sector can better use these assets. The proposed partnership based, experience sharing approach, draws upon other successful local government change programmes.

### Local Government Digital Alliance Steering Board membership

#### Central government

Department for Communities and Local Government  
Cabinet Office, Government Digital Service

#### Local government

Local Government Association

SOLACE,  
SOCITM,  
Local Government Delivery Council  
Local CIO Council  
Local Government Contact Council  
LocalGov Digital

**Terms of reference**

- i) To provide:
  - a. strategic oversight of the work of the alliance to ensure coordination between different activities to deliver outcomes
  - b. political leadership of digital transformation activity
  - c. a conduit for removing blocks to successful transformation of local public services.

Venue and chairing

Meetings will alternate between DCLG and the LGA, with the host chairing the meeting

Frequency

Quarterly

Secretariat

Shared between LGA and DCLG

July 2013

## **Local Government Digital**

### **Background paper for the Local Government Digital Alliance**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Key facts**

- Councils deliver an estimated 600 different services generating 570m transactions per year between citizens and their councils.
- c50% of these transactions are requests for information
- c60% of transactions with councils already takes place online.
- 42% of people transact digitally with their councils – similar to central government (2012 data)

#### **Challenges**

- Using digital to help meet raised public expectations while significantly reducing costs; through efficiency and managing demand (Local Government has estimated English local authorities could save £134-334m per annum depending through successful channel shift to digital)
- Managing and harnessing the potential of superfast broadband roll out to support local economic growth and digital inclusion,
- more effective use of data to target services more efficiently, both to support multi-agency support for customers with complex needs, and use of big data and emerging technologies to manage demand for services,
- growing capacity, both community capacity and individual skills, to support growth and inclusion

#### **Objectives (as per the Government Digital Strategy)**

**Promoting Digital by Default so that those customers who are happy to do so interact with their council via well designed and marketed digital channels;**

Local authorities have been in the forefront of digital public services for the last 15 years. Councils are making innovative use of digital tools and technology to improve the quality of their services, for example,

- 75 % of all applications for school admissions are processed online;
- free school meals online applications helps over one million children to receive these meals and saves time and money.
- Most councils use social media and email alerts to keep residents informed of road and school closures resulting from bad weather.

Of around 570m public transactions with local government each year, transactions make up 24 % and the most popular are listed below.

**Table 1: Top 20 local government transactions 2012**

<b>service area</b>	<b>visit type</b>	<b>% of total</b>	<b>visits</b>
Council Tax	make payment	2.92	11,055,088
Libraries	renew/reserve item	2.71	10,236,407
Schools/youth	make applications	2.10	7,936,529
Rubbish and recycling	request service	1.37	5,168,879
Job vacancies	make applications	1.28	4,857,031
Rubbish and recycling	report problem	1.08	4,093,044
Housing	make application	0.94	3,539,474
Highways	report problem	0.88	3,344,569
Parking	make application	0.87	3,274,403
Libraries	make booking	0.80	3,009,332
Planning	view an application	0.74	2,783,243
Environmental Health	report problem	0.38	1,450,093
Parking	make application	0.37	1,411,112
Council tax	make application	0.36	1,379,927
Leisure facilities	make booking	0.36	1,372,131
Libraries	make booking	0.34	1,270,780
Rubbish and recycling	make application	0.33	1,239,595
Rubbish and recycling	make booking	0.32	1,192,818
Housing	make payment	0.27	1,021,302
Parking	report problem	0.26	966,728

*Source SOCITM for GDS 2012*

While making a booking and requesting a service are generic transactions, each service has a different potential for channel shift, and therefore savings. For example, the cheapest and most convenient way to pay Council Tax is via Direct Debit so enabling council tax payers to set up direct debit payments online will reduce transaction costs for councils and the public.

As digital take up of services varies between services and between councils, understanding user needs is essential to accelerating take-up. Experience shows that take up is not driven by socio-economic profile alone. Analysis of school admissions found that factors such as leadership, the council's

commitment to providing usable services and the availability of reliable broadband are critical.

**Enabling collaboration with a range of partners including, the private, voluntary and community sectors, to support the development and implementation of digital solutions**

**Supporting those citizens and businesses who are not currently using digital services to transition to them as soon as possible; but providing assisted digital access through traditional channels where they remain unable to do so independently;**

Many councils have extensive experience in assisted digital provision, through libraries, community centres and other frontline staff assistance (and with direct involvement by the Society of Chief Librarians in developing the Government's assisted digital proposals), plus through proxies such as support workers, and contributing in cash and kind to numerous locally funded volunteer schemes.

The Department is working with local authorities, and other partners to support local government activity to develop appropriate assisted digital support for service users, through the formation of a new Local Assisted Digital Panel that will promote knowledge sharing between local public service practitioners and central programmes.

**Maximise the potential of digital, including roll out of super-fast broadband and ensuring high quality education and training, to support local economic growth;**

Digital is increasingly recognised as a priority for infrastructure investment, and essential job skill and a significant source of economic growth. It is an important component of local growth strategies:

**Establishing the framework to support growth:**

Enterprise Zones include super fast broadband as part of the offer. City deal negotiations have also included super-fast broadband.

DCLG in association with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has actively encouraged local authorities to work with Broadband Delivery UK.

Councils have matched funded the Government's £530m Rural Broadband programme to help local businesses achieve economic growth and will enable more people to work flexibly from home, improve educational outcomes for children and provide greater opportunities for older people to remain independent longer.

The £150m Urban Broadband programme, a series of super-connected cities have been announced with a strong focus on economic growth, small and

medium-sized enterprise development and driving demand amongst those who need to build digital skills.

More widely many local authorities are also using digital to encourage economic growth in their areas; these range from providing high speed broadband to lowering the cost of entry for small and medium-sized enterprises for public sector contracts and planning policies encouraging hi-tech clusters. As the Local Government Association's local growth campaign has shown an increasing number of councils are adopting innovative ways to drive local growth. Examples of locally grown digital innovation showing the way ahead include:

### **Encouraging the growth of local digital small and medium-sized enterprises**

Opportunities for enterprise – Increasingly Local Enterprise Partnerships are looking to actively engage with local public/private/small and medium-sized enterprise/voluntary sector digital enterprises and programmes. This needs to become the default position across all localities so that the forging of links between local digital interests can help stimulate local growth. Models that could offer a pattern across the country include Digital Hampshire (championed by the Hampshire Senate Initiative which draws public/private/and voluntary sector bodies together in a virtual network to tackle common areas on interest such as growth, digital inclusion etc) and the University of Brighton/StartUp Britain – Brighton Fuse Project and the Tech City Investment Organisation(TCIO) who are supporting 50 fast growing digital businesses in the UK

Opportunities from digital programmes – Identifying the local digital business opportunities that could emerge from major programmes (as highlighted in the Government Digital Strategy ) such as Universal Credit, electoral registration and identity assurance and use them to stimulate local digital developments or helping to co-produce more open public services. Previous programmes like Tell Us Once have a successful record on encouraging local innovation.

Opportunities from local innovation - Helping to exploit local digital public sector assets, "Big" Data and IPR. The DCLG Digital Localism Research Project identified around 150 local public digital solutions that had been funded directly or indirectly by central programmes. In a number of cases these solutions have been successfully exploited by joint venture-type partnerships between local public service providers, developers and enterprises to roll-out a wider offering to the market. The DCLG My Community Rights programme is funding the **Our Digital Community** project (led by The Creative Coop) that is working with local organisations and enterprises who are seeking to be involved in the development and deployment digital assets across within their communities.

It is anticipated that some of the keys areas for consideration in looking at these issues will include the work of Consumer Focus around service design, the role of digital engagement and online consultation in service design and

participatory budgetary decision making<sup>1</sup>; and the emerging findings of the Sustaining IT (SUS-IT) Research programme looking at how wider digitalisation and new technology can help promote autonomy and independence amongst an aging population.

### **Joining up and support strong local authority input into relevant Government Digital Strategy exemplar service transformation programmes**

The Government Digital Strategy identifies seven central departments which between them handle the majority of central government transactions. These are:

- HM Revenue & Customs
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Ministry of Justice
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Home Office

To improve joint working between central and local government the DCLG has undertaken an initial assessment of exemplar services' impact on local government (annex A). The DCLG is working with GDS and other departments to ensure that local government expertise is properly represented on governance and implementation teams.

### **Creating a sector wide strategic appreciation of the benefits of, and leadership for providing, digitally enabling services, and Developing a sector wide approach which fosters the sharing of good practice and learning.**

Interaction with councils is exercised at a leadership level through the Local Government Association, Local Government Delivery Council and Local Chief Information Officer Council; via professional bodies such as SOLACE and SOCITM; and working with practitioner networks. The new Local Digital Alliance, by providing political leadership, aims to support the different sector led digital transformation initiatives by sharing learning, skills, expertise and standards.

The Government Digital Strategy published in October 2012 recognised the importance of local government as a public service provider, as a delivery partner for key transactions and a source of innovation and expertise. So while the Government Digital Strategy focuses on central government services, a key theme is to work more effectively with all public services, and their suppliers, to deliver better services. The Strategy commits government to:

- “Make the digital assets (standards, designs, code) generated as a result of this central Government Digital Strategy widely available to help other organisations improve their digital offerings.
- Share central government plans for service transformation with local authorities and other partners so they have the opportunity to influence, and plan for, successful implementation.
- Work with local authorities, their representative and professional bodies to support sector led improvement.”

While this commitment is welcome, the longer term aspiration is to move from collective learning to co-design solutions that work for our shared customers. An aim of the Local Government Digital Alliance is to bring together at political leadership level, local and central government to forge more collaborative working relations to the benefit of citizens and tax payers.

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