Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Digital Strategy 2024 - 2027

Telford Connected – creating a better borough through digital innovation

September 2024

Foreword

Telford Connected – creating a better borough through digital innovation

Our Council Plan sets out how the Council will operate and what we will focus on delivering. At the heart of this is our vision to 'build a more inclusive borough' which we will deliver through four priorities:

- all neighbourhoods are connected, safe and clean
- everyone is able to live a healthy independent life
- everyone benefits from good education and can fulfil their potential in a thriving economy
- the environment is protected for the benefit of everyone.

It is the core focus of the Council to drive delivery of these priorities. This will only be achieved by the Council using its resources efficiently and effectively and by working in partnership with communities, partners, businesses and other stakeholders. We have adopted a priority for the organisation to enable us to drive and steer our approach:

This Digital Strategy aims to achieve this goal, in alignment with the Invest in Telford Strategy and the Customer Strategy. It also builds on the work accomplished in the previous three years and sets the direction for the new Digital Strategy from 2024 - 2027.
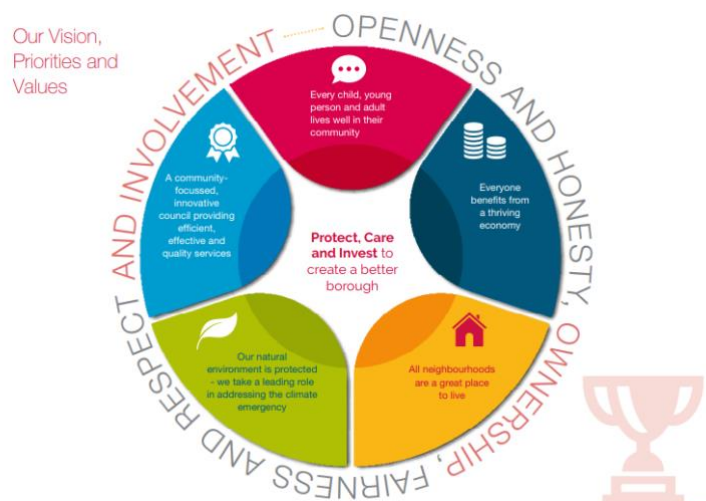
We put our customers first in everything we do. Our customers include the people, organisations, visitors, and stakeholders who live or have an interest in the borough. We want to use digital technology effectively to communicate and work with our residents, customers and partner organisations, by creating the right digital environment for our communities.

We underwent a Local Government Association peer review in May 2022 of our Customer and Digital services which resulted in positive feedback on the services we provide and recommended some improvements which has helped to strengthen our customer experience.

We are dedicated to adopting and investing in the most recent digital innovations including smart technology for improving efficiency, enhancing productivity, securing data and expanding access to services.

We are committed to the implementation and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). This means assessing the risks to the rights and freedoms of individuals that may arise when using AI and implementing appropriate and proportionate technical and organisational measures to mitigate these risks.

Additionally, this approach contributes to our environmental responsibility by reducing our carbon footprint. Our employees will benefit from technology equipment and services that enable efficient work and seamless collaboration with partners.

We also acknowledge that navigating the digital landscape can be challenging. Therefore, we are dedicated to ensuring that those without access or digital skills are not left behind and ensuring that some non-digital channels will be left open for those that need them. We are committed to the broad options of channels to communicate with the Council and providing our customers with choice.

We have signed the Local Digital Declaration along with hundreds of other local authorities, a shared ambition for the future of local public services.

There is currently an approved capital budget to support the Digital strategy of £12.499m for the period 24/25 to 27/28.

Cllr Zona Hannington
Cabinet Member for Finance,
Governance & Customer Services

Aims

- The key aims of the Digital Strategy are:

- Delivering a **consistent, easy to use and reliable customer experience** across all sections of the organisation, no matter which contact or communication channel our customers choose to use.

- We will continue to make our digital services **user-friendly and accessible**, through encouraging those customers who can interact with the council online to do so. It helps us to allocate more resource to improve the services for those customers who need to reach us using conventional contact methods.

- Creating and supporting a **digitally skilled and confident community**, who are able to access services and opportunities online, including jobs of the future.

- Giving people the right digital access so they can do more for themselves, **encouraging inclusion, and promoting accessibility**.

- Working with our partners, using digital technology, to **empower** and **enable people to fulfil their potential**, be actively **involved** in their **communities,** stay safe and live healthy independent lives for longer.

- Supporting **growth of the digital/tech sector** and **increasing digital skills** and the use of technology to improve productivity and growth in businesses borough wide.

- To **enhance Gigabit and 5G connectivity for residents and businesses** in Telford and Wrekin. Closely monitoring this progress and maintaining our partnership with National Government Schemes, including Building Digital UK, to improve high speed connectivity in remote rural areas of Telford and ensuring full urban connectivity.

- Continue to create **Telford Connected – creating a better borough through digital innovation** by improving the way that services are delivered through the deployment of smart technology.

- Providing, enabling and encouraging the Council, partners, and customers with secure, reliable, resilient IT infrastructure whilst reducing our own carbon footprint.

- Fostering a culture of digital leadership, innovation and ongoing service improvement whilst enabling our workforce to have the skills and abilities to deliver our priorities and to have the opportunity to further develop.

This Digital Strategy outlines five Digital Themes that explain our vision and how we will implement it.

1. Digital customers

In January 2021 we launched our Customer Strategy 'Improving our Customer Experience – our Journey to excellence by 2025' This strategy sets out our clear, ambitious vision for delivering a consistent and reliable customer experience across all sections of the organisation, no matter which contact or communication channel our customers choose to use.

The strategy was refreshed in 2022 to reflect that much of the initial improvement plan and action list had already delivered, particularly in relation to creation of new online and self-service options for customers, such as the very successful 'Ask Tom' automated assistant.

Work has already commenced on the launch of a new customer strategy for 2025 onwards, which will build upon the digital innovations we have already delivered and look forward to new and emerging technology that can further improve the customer experience.

We will continue to make our digital services user-friendly and accessible, through encouraging those customers who can interact with the council online to do so, it helps us to allocate more resource to improve the services for those customers who need to reach us using conventional contact methods.

2. Digital care and support

We will maximise the potential of digital technology in how we communicate and engage with our customers and partner organisations through providing the right digital environment within communities. Giving people the right digital access and skills so they can do more for themselves encouraging and supporting digital inclusion, promoting accessibility and supporting new skills, helping people live well and independently for longer.

We will work with our communities and our partners across our Integrated Care System (ICS) to Digitise, Connect and Transform services, providing the core foundations to promote independence. This will align with the ICS Digital Strategy, working with our partners including health and housing, using digital technology, to empower and enable people to fulfil their potential, be actively involved in their communities, stay safe and live healthy independent lives for longer in Telford and Wrekin.

The Local Care Transformation Programme, for example, will see the delivery of virtual wards (enabling people to get the care they need at home safely and conveniently rather than being in hospital) in order to deliver a sustainable health and care system for the residents of Telford, and deliver digital solutions for children and young people's mental health services, as well as adult mental health transformation.

Population Health Management will use data to accurately predict and understand current health care needs and what the local population will need in the future.

3. Digital economy and skills

Telford aims to be a hub of innovation, building on its rich history from the industrial revolution to modern-day advances in Agri-Tech and digital technologies.

The new Quad at Station Quarter will become a centrepiece for fostering entrepreneurship and business-academic collaboration.

We will support our businesses from SMEs to major employers to utilise new technology and through the new Quad we will ensure that Telford's residents have the skills needed to embrace new technology, understanding its application across all sectors.

We will continue to promote the Telford Online IT drop-in sessions that are offered through libraries and extend the sessions to out-reach locations in community hubs. We will be surveying within the community to identify where there are gaps in digital support and shape our future plans for hard to reach customers who are not using digital services

4. Digital place

To develop 'Telford Connected' – creating a better borough through digital innovation using information and communication technologies to improve the way sensors operate, from street lighting to public transport and more.

In collaboration with Virgin Media O2 under a 10-year gigabit network contract, the council aims to enhance Gigabit and 5G connectivity for residents and businesses in Telford and

Wrekin. We will closely monitor this progress and maintain our partnership with National Government Schemes, including Building Digital UK, to improve connectivity in remote rural areas of Telford and ensuring full urban connectivity.

The overarching goal is to make Telford a resilient, future-proof community that thrives on change and innovation.

5. Digital council

The rapid advancement of modern technology has transformed every aspect of our lives. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that Telford & Wrekin Council's workforce has access to dependable, flexible, and secure IT services.

We will foster a culture of digital leadership, innovation and ongoing service improvement, to empower our teams to adjust quickly to shifting local and national priorities.

Our skilled workforce will continue to be equipped to deliver our priorities effectively and will have ongoing opportunities for further development.

As part of our commitment to progress, we will continue to embrace innovative IT solutions and explore how AI can contribute.

Digital customers:

Our journey so far:

Launch of new Leisure website and Leisure System with improved self-service options and enhanced information.

The new system has seen the following improvements:

- Increase in online booking- Particularly the Ice rink, where online bookings have risen from 18% overall advance booking to over 30%
- Ability for swimming lessons to book online, prior to the new system customers had to call the centre to do this. 30% of swimming lessons booking are now online
- Ability to sign up for a TLC card online- this functionality was not previously available. Now 30% of all new TLC Cards issued are online
- Leisure Dashboard created- Enables live data on KPI'S to be available for Team leaders.
- Overall decrease in calls into leisure centres
- Increase in online joining for Aspirations and income growth- Membership base grown from 4875 members (121k per month) to members to 5740 members (146k per month)

- Launched a new digital assistant 'Ask-Tom' which is available 24/7 to respond to the most frequently asked customer questions. Over 13,000 enquires were resolved by the assistant in the last year with a >99% customer satisfaction rate. 32% of these enquires are managed outside of our normal opening hours. Ask-Tom has received national recognition for our innovative use of technology and won the Association of

Public Service Excellence 'Best Transformation and Efficiency Initiative' Award in 2023 and has been shortlisted for the Institute of Customer Services Best Use of Technology award for 2024. We have also expanded the knowledge base of Ask-Tom to manage more council services, including leisure, theatre, passenger transport and schools admissions enquiries.

- Increased the number of services that can be accessed through webchat (AskTom?) and moved this to a more prominent home-page location, which has led to a 40% increase in customers using this service.

- Launched a new 'My Telford' app to replace 'Everyday Telford' with improved functionality and ease of use and has been downloaded 15,600 times.

- Introduced a regular review program for web pages to ensure content is refreshed when needed and completed a review of the functionality and design of websites, reducing the number of stand-alone Council operated websites.

- Migrated call handling for new services e.g. Registration Services and Housing into the corporate contact centre. New call centres have also been created to handle enquires regarding passenger transport, libraries, leisure, free school meals and revenues recovery. These changes have led to a significant improvement in call handling in these areas. For example, the number of calls abandoned across our leisure centres was between 74%-28% before the introduction of the call centre. That figure now stands at between 2%-0.7%.

- Implemented a series of improvements to the customer experience of using the MyTelford portal, including the inclusion of a customer survey in the closure email sent to each customer. The feedback from these surveys will enable us to prioritise future development and improvement to the system.

- A review of the First Point Service being offered through our libraries was undertaken in early 2023, to ascertain the current level of demand and the key reasons that people were choosing to make a face-to-face enquiry. As a result of this, refresher training was provided to all library staff on the online and digital services that are available to

residents and a reminder to support and encourage residents to channel shift to online services were appropriate.

- Launched new online [Customer Service Essentials](#) training course for all staff, with an emphasis on 'everything speaks'. This has been completed by 1,093 employees to date.

- Launch event for new My Telford App was run for Town and Parish Councils, and a commitment to provide ongoing support included in the Town and Parish Council Partnership Agreement. Guidance has been provided to Borough and Town and Parish Councillors on how to use the MyTelford app, and our other online channels.

- Expanded our customer insight programme which uses our pool of 214 Mystery Customer volunteers to give real user experience feedback of using council services, including user-testing of new online services before they go live.

- Our digital library service includes eBooks, eAudio, eMagazines and provides 24/7 content for these devices and for all residents with a library card.

- Creation of a custom system using Microsoft Power Platform for travel assistance and transport requests. The system streamlines processing, includes automation, and culminates in an app for drivers, passenger assistance, and travel providers. Additionally, we're exploring opportunities to offer this system to other local councils.

What else will we do?

- We have launched a telephone-based version of our automated assistant 'Ask Tom' to our call centre system. This was agreed following a short trial of the system which had extremely positive results.

- Phase one of 'Ask Tom' telephony was launched in July 2024. All calls into our contact centres will initially be answered by the digital assistant, which will use advanced voice recognition to allow customers to respond to the simple question of "how can I help you today?". The assistant will then provide a response to the customer, drawn from its extensive bank of pre-scripted answers as well as giving the customer the choice of having the information sent directly to their mobile phone. If the assistant is unable to answer the question, it will connect the customer through to a customer advisor.

- The second phase of 'Ask Tom' telephony will supplement the pre-scripted language model with generative AI. This will then enable the assistant to draw upon a much wider range of information to generate bespoke responses to questions, covering a

much wider range of service areas. This version of the technology will be implemented in the second half of 2024.

- This has the potential to change the entire model fundamentally and significantly for how we manage customer contact via our telephone system and will lead to a new set of priority actions to be delivered in addition to those already within our customer strategy. This should also reduce demand in the contact centre, which would enable us to consider how to improve to the customer experience for those that need greater support.

- We will update our Customer Contract to include how we will use Artificial Intelligence within our services.

- The main council website www.telford.gov.uk is in the process of moving onto a new platform that will have an improved look and feel along with integration with a number of systems which will improve the customer experience by reducing the number of separate logins needed.

- Within Leisure we will introduce my fitness app, this will further improve channel shift, especially for regular online customer and the introduction of a new Digital Membership Card.

- Introduction of map layers to My Telford to enable residents to pinpoint a job direct to an asset, such as a bin or streetlight, along with improvements to registration process and password reset for My Telford. We will be further exploring the use of QR codes and what3words.

- Review Council's social media strategy to drive ongoing improvements in the way we use our social channels to share information with customers and facilitate their engagement with us and continue to promote a digital first approach.

- Work towards a single sign-on process for customers so that more third-party online portals can be accessed through the MyTelford account.

- Continue to explore and deploy the opportunities of AI in the provision of council services. Embrace voice assistant technology through services such as Alexa, Google Assist with integration into MyTelford services.

- Leverage new in-house studio facility to continue to create high-quality digital content.

Digital care and support

Our journey so far:

Our Virtual House is now complete and fully accessible via Live Well Telford: Virtual House tour - Virtual House tour - Telford & Wrekin Council. Residents can take an interactive tour of the house to see examples of assistive technology and sensory aids and equipment that help with daily activities around the home.

Positive feedback received includes: "I have completed a tour of the house and have noted three items which I will purchase. The virtual tour is an excellent idea – I found it informative and easy to navigate".

- Created the Independent Living Centre (ILC) – Technology showcase 'try before you buy' partnership with voluntary sector, health and social care partners and people with lived experience of care and support needs, working together to help residents to help themselves to live more independently, using technology enabled care.

- Introduced regular Virtual and Physical Hubs offering 'drop in' and appointment services for information and advice to aid independent living, supported by video consultation and digital platforms. Also, regular virtual/in person Multi-Disciplinary Teams meetings with partners and professionals.

- Implemented an App to aid Mental Health professionals and booking Doctors (in partnership with ICB).

- Collaborated with the community and suppliers to facilitate and assist the Digital Switchover for telecare. Medequip are our current supplier of community alarms and technology enabled care. All alarms are now digital and therefore ready and suitable

when telecom suppliers' digital switchover happens in Telford and Wrekin. The scheduled plan of work has started with the new community alarms provider and vulnerable individuals have received communication and replacement equipment where needed

- Implemented One Health and Care – a confidential digital shared Health and Social Care record which collates information from different organisations within Health and Social Care and enables professional services to view relevant data facilitating an informed response to a person presenting needs. The record is fully compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018. One Health and Care enables professionals to provide better care by ensuring they have access to the most up-to-date information about the people they support. It reduces people having to keep repeating their health and social care history to health and social care professionals.

- In September 2022, together with Shropshire Council and our Integrated Care System (ICS), we successfully applied for funding through the NHS Digitising Social Care as part of the DSCR (Digital Social Care Record) Providers Programme. The aim being to help CQC registered adult social care providers to use digital technologies that can improve care.

- In total we received 90 expressions of interest from providers (against a target of 68), and have since received 73 funding bids from providers and have been able to fund a total of £305,824.18

- 91% of care providers in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin now have a DSCR (Digital Social Care Record).

  The benefits include:

  - projected savings in paper and printing to reduce carbon footprint, £141,042.00
  - Additional 2,580 individuals receiving care in a care home or domiciliary care in the community supported with a digital social care record
  - Data (from the Integrated Care Board) has shown an average reduction of 17% in admissions to hospital across 36 care homes which have implemented a digital social care record system. In real terms this means that there has been a reduction of 91 people being admitted to hospital from care homes

- In late 2023, infrared technology to detect falls and track the habits and behaviours of residents was introduced as a pilot. This technology can also identify changes in activity that could affect the health and wellbeing of residents and prevent them from getting worse. If a resident falls and stays on the floor, an alert is sent within 45 seconds, which reduces the risk of hospital admission due to long lies. It is also being tested to reduce the need for one-to-one care by providing information on when

residents leave their beds and how they behave. The pilot is currently in place in three care homes across Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

- Ethel is our commissioned Smart Hub which enables virtual care support for an individual where physical 'hands on' care is not needed. The use of this kind of virtual care support can be embedded in all steps of an individual's experience to promote independence. Collaborating with home care providers to use technology enabled care monitoring as a supplement to physical visits. We are now expanding the group of people who can benefit from Ethel smart hub monitoring, which is for those people who have long term care and support needs.

- Use of the 'Oysta' – the scheme, which started in 2021, gives people fully mobile assistive technology that they can use to contact carers as and when they need to during the night. Please see link to ITV news: https://www.itv.com/news/central/2023-03-31/new-device-aiming-to-tackle-social-care-crisis-piloted-in-telford-and-wrekin

- Use of a digital app as part of the nationally recognised LGA Social Care Digital Innovation Pilot to aid independent living and to prepare for work, for people with Learning Disabilities, working with AutonoMe and CC2i.

- Online referral into Family Connect safeguarding for professional partners to streamline and speed up the referral process.

- Care Providers portal introduced, linking to our adult social care case and financial management system to reconcile and pay for care delivered.

What else will we do?

- With a focus on 'making prevention real' we are continuing to work to manage demand and promote independence across Adult Social Care services. The programme of work will review our approach to delivering our statutory duty to prevent, reduce and delay the need for care and support. This will include digital transformation and the use of predictive analytics and AI.

- We are working with our partners across the Integrated Care System and the ICB to implement a Single Health Resilience Early Warning System (SHREWD). This App will use shared data to show the operational situation of local urgent health and care systems. SHREWD will quickly and easily identify where there is pressure across the health and care system e.g. hospital discharge and will support the implementation and effectiveness of System Coordination Centres.

- We are working with WM ADASS colleagues across our Digital Network on three priority areas:

  - Information and advice – online improvements to help prevent, reduce and delay the need for care and support
  - Technology delivery – including assistive technology and virtual care
  - Digital Change - Developing work around the responsible use of AI within Social care; and digital switch over programmes

- We will continue to support our Health and Care System partners, aligning with the ICS Digital Strategy and through the promotion and use of the NHS App and co-pilot. The NHS App provides a simple and secure way for people to access a range of NHS services on their smartphone or tablet. More information can be found here https://digital.nhs.uk/services/nhs-app

- Continuing the excellent work on the Adult Social Care Portal to provide access to self-service, personal referral, assessments, and messaging. It will also enable professionals to digitally refer into Adult Social Care and complete assessments.

Adult Portal

Provides the ability for citizens to access self-help, complete self-assessment, self-referral, two way messaging between Liquidlogic Adult System (LAS) and Adult Portal, sharing of assessments and documents and for the allocated worker to digitally request citizen to contribute to assessments via delegation (a form of sharing information digitally). It also enables Professionals to complete a 'Professional Referral' into LAS.

Professional Portal

Provides the ability for the allocated worker to send sections of assessment to the Professional Portal for the professional to complete and digitally return directly into LAS. Professional Portal functionality is integrated into the Adult Portal Project.

Online Financial Assessment

Provides an indication of how much a person will be required to contribute towards the cost of their care via completion of an Online Financial Assessment which can be uploaded to our financial management system (ContrOCC) for review. A citizen can also upload financial evidence to support their financial assessment. This streamlines the process from a manual paper trail to a system audit trail.

Client Finance Portal

Will provide care account details for the citizen including payment and charging information, financial assessment, bills and payment information and personal budget. It will also provide a tally towards a citizen's Care Cap.

Provider Portal

Allows service providers to perform administrative task such as submitting actuals (care 'actually delivered) and ensuring invoices and purchase orders are accurate. Providers can also communicate with the Council via this platform.

MarketPlace Brokerage Module

The Brokerage Module provides real-time information to manage service availability and market oversight in 'real time' capacity visibility. There is a second phase of the project moving to using Brokerage Module for residential care (non-residential is already in place).

- Continue to develop and promote Live Well Telford, providing information and signposting to a wide range of services, activities and organisations in Telford and Wrekin, to help citizens find the support they need to live healthy independent lives.

- During the recent procurement of our new Digital Community Alarm service, we took the opportunity to explore the technology enabled care that could also support our vision for proactive monitoring. The equipment we have chosen will enable a more proactive and preventative approach, supported by data and insights. Individuals can then receive targeted interventions to meet their needs, enabling people to live more independently in their own homes and communities for longer.

- Two new housing projects will launch in summer 2024, one for adults who have learning disabilities and one for mental health. We are collaborating with the care providers for those projects to implement 'Ethel' virtual monitoring before the residents arrive. This will make sure that the new tenants will know the care model as soon as possible and a new and creative way of getting some of the care support that they need.

- Using infrared technology to detect falls and track the habits and behaviours of residents the third year of the Digital Transformation fund will allow us to offer this technology to at least two more care home providers and to supported living or home care services.

- We have obtained Accelerated Reform Fund to expand three projects across STW: Shared Lives Provision, Carer Led Hubs and Ethel, Cobots (companion robots) and

carer assessments. This will allow Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire to collaborate on the three projects and share the knowledge. We will also use the learning and data from the Virtual Care delivery model in Shropshire supported by the Care Tech Fund in 2023 to explore delivering home care in a more digital way. This could reduce care costs, increase unpaid carer support and provide care digitally while helping people to stay independent in their own homes and avoid accessing residential or nursing care.

Digital economy and skills

Our journey so far:

Through working with a range of partners, including Age UK, Stay, Hub on the Hill, CVS and PODS. A new digital directory of Live Well Telford https://livewell.telford.gov.uk/ has been created, providing a one-stop shop to help people get online e.g. how to access PCs, free Wi-Fi, training etc. In addition, 64 devices have been provided to a range of partners to support local groups/projects, including homework clubs, wellbeing cafes and tea and tech training sessions. A further 40 devices were purchased to introduce a new library lending scheme, which is now available free of charge at three locations.

Feedback provided from PODS for the eight iPads provided from Digital Inclusion Funding – "The iPads have enabled us to deliver varying sessions, the most popular being Minecraft club and coding club. The sessions have allowed children and young adults to come together in a supported environment, resulting in improved engagement with their peers and reduced isolation, alongside developing their skills, knowledge and confidence using IT and digital devices. The parents/carers have also reported that they have found the sessions beneficial by allowing the children to calm and refresh after the strains and stresses of a day at school, it has also allowed the parents to have a coffee and chat to each other resulting in improved well-being".

- Through a social value commitment of the Virgin Media O2 contract, 7 third sector organisations have benefited from free broadband connections for five years.

- Supported over 100 young people with a device via the Leader and Cabinet Young Person Grant scheme

- Through of face-to-face Digital Inclusion sessions, we have 320 residents whom either received 12 hours of digital support over six sessions or attended the digital drop-in support sessions. Get connected sessions focused on delivery of support to residents aged 65+.This helps them to gain confidence to get online, use the internet, online banking and the NHS App, achieving a 97% very satisfied response.

- Started work on the Station Quarter Town Centre business incubator.

- Learn Telford has provided a weekly Job Junction from Wellington Library for advice around employability skills, careers or learning advice, enabling use of the IT equipment in a supported environment. It has also offered basic digital skills courses in community venues, targeting areas with the most poverty. Courses included topics such as, CV writing, word processing, file types and purposes, folder structures, mouse and touch screen functions, online safety, searching for jobs online.

- A pilot project has been delivered with Teldoc Primary Care Network to support patients to download and use the NHS app.

- Collaboration between businesses is being encouraged through 'Hello Telford', a free B2B tool providing a one-stop shop digital platform which gives businesses the chance to collaborate and to buy and sell from each other, whilst reducing their carbon footprint. It strengthens local supply-chains and ensures that more money circulates around local companies. Since this has been created 184 businesses are now signed up, almost 100 live opportunities have been posted since it started with an average of 10 now being live at any one time. As well as the monthly newsletter, business engagement through a LinkedIn page maximises exposure and good news stories. This remains a useful business channel for business support updates and information.

- Added new digital directory to the Live Well Telford website to assist people to get online and develop their digital skills.

- A further enhanced digital directory has been created www.telford.gov.uk/telfordonline

What else will we do?

- 2024 will see the opening of the Station Quarter Town Centre business incubator, managed by Invest Telford within the new Quad being delivered through the Council's successful Town Fund bid. The incubator will sit as part of a new academic campus being delivered in partnership with Telford College and Harper Adams University. The incubator will provide wrap around business support benefitting from links with Harper Adams University based on site and collaboration with other Regional Universities.

- The new Quad at Station Quarter will deliver a new flexible teaching and learning centre alongside business incubation space for innovative start-ups and scale-ups. The Quad will create the perfect environment for innovative thinking and entrepreneurship and will be a focal point for business and academic collaboration.

- We will support our businesses from SMEs to major employers to utilise new technology and through the new Quad we will ensure that Telford's residents have the skills needed to embrace new technology, understanding its application across all sectors.

- We want to support our residents to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to be able to access and use new technology and online services. We will do this by ensuring free and easy access to technology in the community through all our libraries, including the community led libraries, as well as working with community partners to secure access to their facilities.

- We will continue to promote the Telford Online IT drop-in sessions that are offered through libraries and extend the sessions to out-reach locations in community hubs. We will be surveying within the community to identify where there are gaps in digital support and shape our future plans for hard to reach customers who are not using digital services.

- We will continue to support the digitally excluded; through partnership working and seeking opportunities where we can support our residents digitally to enhance their wellbeing. This includes but is not limited to:

  - Working with local Primary Care Networks NHS to support patients accessing health services via a digital platform
  - Working with financial institutions such as HSBC and Barclays to deliver sessions on banking scams, keeping residents safe online.
  - Working with local businesses to provide workplace volunteers under either their social value commitment or volunteer hours to support training sessions.
  - Using the National Databank to support those experiencing digital poverty with a sim card to include data, minutes, and texts.

- Learn Telford will be addressing a known gap by extending digital skills to people who don't have English as a first language (ESOL), where use of technology to support and access services is currently a barrier and introducing Functional Skills IT qualifications at Entry Level 3 and Level 1, to support adults to upskill and achieve formal recognition to evidence their digital capabilities.

- Continuing to work towards our ambition of encouraging schools and colleges more on their current use of digital and developing their own digital policies, recognising that the development of digital skills needs to start an early age and schools and colleges play a fundamental part.

Digital place

Our journey so far:

In 2023, the Council rebranded its inward investment and business support service as Invest Telford. A new website www.investtelford.co.uk effectively promotes the town's strengths and opportunities with case studies from local success stories. Promoted across multiple social channels there are calls to action across the site for businesses, investors and residents, a recent example of this is below:

Fully funded programme of support for borough businesses launched 21st May 2024

Invest Telford is excited to announce the launch of a new programme aimed at empowering businesses to harness innovation for growth. The new council fund called Innovate Telford offers a unique opportunity for over 100 Telford businesses to benefit from funding to help them transform over the course of 6 months.

The initiative is part of a £460,000 investment to boost innovation levels in local businesses and represents the latest council scheme to launch utilising part of its £5.8 million UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation.

Innovate Telford is split into two elements. Part one aims to help up to 60 businesses kick start their innovation journey and focuses on fostering a culture of innovation within local Small and Medium Enterprises and start-ups; equipping them with the necessary tools to embrace the possibilities of doing things differently

- High quality digital infrastructure is being delivered thanks to the partnership between Telford & Wrekin Council and Virgin Media O2 Business, boosting digital inclusion and job opportunities in the borough. This provides access to ultra-fast fibre connectivity for more than 200 public buildings, including schools, libraries and council offices. The introduction of new cabling lays the foundations for an extra 12,000 homes and businesses to have access to ultra-fast fibre services in the future. This investment will also facilitate providing high-speed connectivity to both urban and rural areas of the

borough; along with providing the infrastructure for further connectivity improvements such as the facilitating delivery of 5G.

- Within Telford the current gigabit coverage is at 79.8% (Ofcom Connected Nations Summer'23) and is expected (high confidence) to reach 93.5% of all properties by May 2026 compared to an expected UK-wide 90% (England only = 91%) according to Ofcom's Connected Nations. This is the next generation of fixed digital infrastructure and builds upon the previous work which saw 98% of premises in Telford and Wrekin able to access Superfast broadband.

- Smart places use information and communication technologies to improve the way they operate, from street lighting to public transport and more. We are piloting a connectivity solution called LoraWAN which is excellent at transmitting sensor data over long ranges and our first pilot is using Gully Sensors in high-risk areas of road flooding. 'These sensors monitor the level of water in the gully and are expected to reduce the number of site visits by at least 50%, saving money and reducing emissions from travel to site.

- Worked with the Housing Investment Programme and Nuplace to ensure our new build housing is part of our digitally connected Borough.

- Telford's many and varied attractions are being promoted through the recently launched Visit Telford website www.visittelford.co.uk. Our offer is diverse from the UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Ironbridge Gorge to market towns packed with history; hundreds of miles of cycling and walking trails and routes through heritage woodlands and magical forests; and 17 Local Nature Reserves.

What else will we do?

- In collaboration with Virgin Media O2 under a 10-year gigabit network contract, the council aims to enhance Gigabit connectivity for residents and businesses in Telford and Wrekin. We will closely monitor this progress and maintain our partnership with National Government Schemes, including Building Digital UK, to improve connectivity in remote rural areas of Telford.

- We will work with mobile providers to accelerate deployment of 5g e.g. by offering the use of Council-owned Street furniture for deployment of 5G small cells.

- We will keep improving our Public 'High Street' Wi-Fi Service to enhance its reliability and ease of access in designated areas.

- We will continue to create Telford Connected – creating a better borough through digital innovation, our 'Smart City' approach for Telford by increasing our network of physical devices and appliances that are embedded with sensors, software and network connectivity that allows them to collect and share data to improve the ways they operate.

Digital council

Our journey so far

Cyber Security has been at the forefront of our service delivery and design. We have implemented a new Third-Generation Security Firewall: Our upgraded security firewall ensures robust protection against cyber threats. Implemented Zivver's Secure Digital Communications Platform: This platform prevents communication-related data leaks, boosts productivity, and ensures compliance with data privacy regulations.

The impact of the introduction of Zivver has been significant. The number of data breaches/incidents (post Zivver's introduction) reported for the period 1 April – 30 May has reduced by nearly 60% in 24/25 compared to the same period in 23/24.
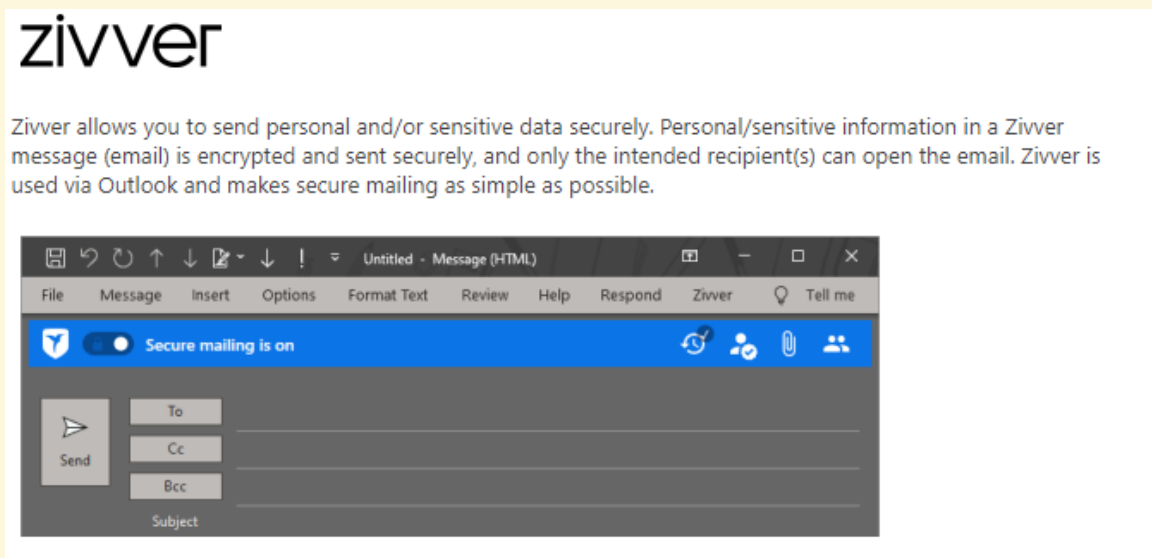
- We have moved to Microsoft E5 licencing to take advantage of further security enhancements and Cyber Essential Learning is a mandatory training course for all our employees.

- We have consistently delivered excellent digital services, ensuring reliable access to systems and information. Our average service uptime was 99.92% in 2021 and remained high at 99.88% in both 2022 and 2023.

- Continued to invest in modern virtualisation and cloud infrastructure to provide a reliable digital service to employees and to enable anywhere-access to critical Council business applications and services.

- Data is a key asset of our organisation, and we remain committed to turning this data into meaningful business intelligence, informing how we best deliver services to meet the needs of our communities. The Council's commitment to evidence-based decision making has seen many improvements in the use of data for many Council services, such as significant increases in the use of Power BI for interactive reports and dashboards, as well as increases in data modelled and processes automated for more efficient reporting. In many services, data routinely informs the way we strategically and operationally understand the needs of communities, monitor service performance, make decisions and evidence the impact of change. Data dashboards have enabled us to quickly identify changes and make earlier interventions, based on evidence, to improve outcomes, for example supporting programmes such as healthy lifestyles and safer stronger communities to target resources at communities and see the impact of their work.

- We take pride in our successful completion of major IDT projects. Some of these include:

  - New data centre technology: Implemented a new hyperconverged data centre (combines storage, computing and networking into a single system), enhancing our infrastructure's reliability and efficiency.
  - CRM dynamics upgrade: Migrating from on premise older versions of 4 and 13 to Dynamics Cloud.
  - Hybrid meeting spaces: The creation of versatile meeting spaces that seamlessly integrate in-person and virtual collaboration.
  - HR and payroll migration to Zellis cloud: Migrating our HR and payroll systems to the Zellis cloud.
  - Delivery of new Council meeting system. To allow Council meetings to be livestreamed to support openness, transparency and engagement in the decision-making process.

- Continued to deliver bespoke IT training opportunities to support employees to be highly capable and motivated by providing access to regular, up-to-date and high-quality information, training and self-service learning content.

What else will we do?

- Ensure consistent digital service through maintaining reliable access to systems and information, consistently improve services, and implement best practices for our employees.

- Foster a 'Digital First' Culture collaborate across service areas to drive innovative service delivery, with a strong emphasis on digital solutions.

- Continue to enhance Cyber Security at the forefront of our service delivery and design through the deployment of Multi Factor Authentication in Windows Hello.

- Replace the current telephony system with Microsoft Teams telephony functionality, ensuring that communication is all in one place.

- Deploy Windows 11 in line with our capital refresh desktop equipment strategy to keep up to date with technology and best practice.

- Promote and embed the use of all Office 365 applications including Power Apps, Power Automate, Power BI and CoPilot.

- We are committed to taking a risk-based approach to the implementation and use of AI. This means assessing the risks to the rights and freedoms of individuals that may arise when using AI and implementing appropriate and proportionate technical and organisational measures to mitigate these risks.

- Utilising CoPilot in key areas that can make a difference, such as HR, Customer Services and Adult Social Care as early adopters.

- Prioritise IDT Learning and Development and promote Microsoft Teams training as the initial focus for employees.

- We plan to make even better use of our data and be a fully data-driven organisation with a high level of data maturity. This includes continuing to invest in the right technology and infrastructure to derive the maximum benefit from the data we hold, maximise automation and reduce duplication. Our aspiration is to continue to innovate our uses of data to improve our services, and this will include bringing together data from across systems and agencies, for example in projects such as the creation of a 'single digital view of a child' and a shared resource using data to improve support for vulnerable residents. We will also look to increase our data maturity by developing our use of predictive and prescriptive analytics, as well as opportunities in analytics for the use of AI, enabling us to use data and technology to explore what is likely to happen in the future. These projects will require a balance between protection of sensitive

information and the imperative to share critical data for the greater good and will be delivered as part of high-profile programmes of work.

- Continue to maintain, further develop and improve internal communication systems such as the intranet and our internal Facebook group.

- Continue to work closely with Information Governance to ensure digital data is processed appropriately and securely.

- Support adults and children's social care services and education and skills to further adopt modern and remote methods of working where appropriate, i.e. virtual meetings, app adoption, online referrals, integrated care records, speech-to-text case management, portals, the use of technology to reduce travel.

- Support frontline workers and staff without devices to access required communications, information and systems.

- We will modernise our deployment methodology for end user devices. Using cloud-based services, we will reduce the time spent on deploying, managing, and retiring devices, and reduce the infrastructure required to maintain them. This will maximize the ease of use and end user experience, while also enhancing the security and compliance of the devices. This will enhance support for hybrid work by enabling remote deployment and management of devices.

- Continue to adopt technology solutions in place of traditional functions, i.e. paperless ouncil, continued soft phone transition, greater Microsoft Teams and SharePoint adoption for communication and collaboration and to promote modern methods of securing and sharing data, i.e. encrypted email, SharePoint sharing and where appropriate, automate administrative tasks and processes throughout the Council to achieve greater efficiency, accuracy and output.

- Continue to reduce our reliance on legacy hardware and infrastructure and continue to adopt and invest in modern virtualisation and cloud infrastructure, services and applications to improve services provided and to reduce the councils own carbon footprint.

How will we know if we've succeeded?

We will monitor and report on our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Our KPIs include:

- Number of online transactions (all services)
- % of online contacts/% telephone contacts in main Contact Centres
- Customer satisfaction with key customer contact channels and Council Website
- Number of people following TWC on social media channels
- Number of people accessing support to get online through drop-ins
- Number people signed up for Gov Delivery email updates and % open rate
- % usage of available public access sessions in libraries
- Number of Telford Online sessions
- Maintaining employee satisfaction with IDT
- Cybersecurity protection through our annual audit process
- Improving independence outcomes for people using Ethel smart hub as part of their care and support

We will evidence changes and improvements that have been made to digital services directly as a result of feedback from our customers and residents. We will also publish online any improvements we have made as a direct result of customer feedback.