Newcastle City Council: Digital by Choice

January 2015

1. Introduction

We live in a digital world. Our daily lives are increasingly built around services which are delivered digitally. An ever increasing number of us expect to be able to conduct daily routine business and activity digitally. For many, perhaps the majority, this is now their preference over any other forms of contact. The world is becoming digital by choice.

> The **City of Newcastle** is at the forefront of this Digital Change. Partners across the City – including the City Council, Universities, business community, and other public service providers are quickly recognising that Digital can be the key to unlocking economic growth and becoming a world class city – one that is safe, sustainable, cares for vulnerable people and encourages learning and achievement.
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> Effective use of digital services by citizens, businesses and the voluntary and community sector has the potential to transform the way our City works and transform people's lives: boost productivity, drive economic growth, provide jobs, connect individuals and revitalise the way services are delivered.
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> To enable this we need citizens, old and young and businesses, big and small, to have the right skills and access to modern and reliable technology.   As a City we are gearing up to provide this, but we know that more can be done to join up provision and opportunities, and present a truly citywide vision. Our discussions with partners are ongoing and we will continue to use our influence to promote the broader 'Digital Newcastle' agenda.

Within this increasingly digital environment, **Newcastle City Council** has not kept pace with change. We have yet to make it easy enough for those who want to engage digitally, nor have we made a persuasive case to those who are hesitant and unconvinced about the benefits of being digitally active. We need to develop a digital service offer which matches and surpasses customer expectations to the point where it becomes the channel of choice.

Our vision is to have excellent digital services which are so easy to use that they are naturally the way people choose to engage with us.

We want to:

- **Improve digital opportunities for residents to help them access an improved customer experience (for NCC services and beyond)**
- **Minimise internal costs of service**
- **Maximise income**

Improving our digital services means designing simple, seamless and user-friendly processes that make it easy for customers to access services and make payments whenever and wherever they want to. It means capturing the right information in the right format to enable us to improve services and efficiency.

But it isn't limited to traditional services and activities. We want to promote digital change in everything we do –encouraging and supporting the use of digital technology in social care and health settings, using social media to crowd source funding for community assets, understanding how technology can change the way we deliver front line services and many more. As the Council faces up to increasing budget reductions, we need to use Digital to help change our service provision while maintaining outcomes for residents, partners, suppliers and customers.

It also means ensuring our staff have a 'digital mindset', and not only fully understand how digital can change and improve lives, but actively support others in doing so.

Our digital services will give us better data and insight about customers helping us to make continuous improvements to services. Digital engagement will enrich our consultation with our customers on policy proposals and changes so that we can make better decisions.

This will have big implications for customers, councillors, our staff and our systems, involving changes to the types of jobs we will be doing, the services we provide, and the skills and technology we will need.

2. How will we know we have achieved our vision?

We will know we have made difference when we have genuinely changed the way our organisation, our residents and our partners feel about our digital offer:

New and existing customers

- My preference is to interact with the Council digitally rather than any other way.
- I can interact with the council anytime I want and using any device I choose.
- It's easy to find information about services I want to use and the council keeps me informed about changes and issues which matter to me.
- The council's online services are easy to use, reliable and secure. I have my own account and I only have to identify myself once.
- I get a consistent online experience whichever of the council's services I'm using.
- I feel confident doing this, and can use my skills to do much more than interact with the Council.
- I can access the internet for free in a supportive and reassuring environment.
- There's personalised support to help me on the pathway from absolute beginner to expert user of the internet.

Councillors

- I am confident that the people I represent are supported to access council services digitally

- I have a better understanding of people living in my ward and what services they use and value.
- It's easy for me to reach a lot of people online and meet their needs.
- It's easy for me to keep on top of council and ward business
- Increased use of social media and online contact with the people I represent means improved citizenship and involvement.

Staff and managers

- I fully understand the benefits of digital and actively support others in doing so
- As a lot of routine processes are automated, I can focus more of my time on the things that make the most difference to customers.
- I'm a lot more productive as I can work flexibly and remotely, and it's easier to collaborate with colleagues, partners and suppliers.
- We have a better understanding of our customers which informs how we co-design and target our services.
- Insight and foresight helps us to act quickly and either prevent problems or intervene early to improve outcomes.
- We provide our customers with seamless end-to-end services, make the most of every contact to provide better service and to learn about our customers needs and expectations .
- We provide consistent services more cost effectively and maximise income recovery.
- We work more closely with other services to provide joined up services to customers.
- We can gather and analyse a wide range of data to help us improve performance

Businesses, suppliers and partners

- We can interact with the council anytime we want and using any device.
- The council works with us to provide joined up services to our mutual customers
- The council helps me to innovate and grow my business through provision of infrastructure support and skills development for us and potential customers
- Providing goods and services to the council is cost effective and straightforward because we can deal with them digitally from procurement right through to delivery and ongoing contract management.

Visitors to Newcastle
- It's easy to find the information I need and access services to get the most out of my visit to Newcastle.
- When I visit the City Centre, I can access the internet (and key visitor information) for free using the Council's sponsored Wi-Fi.