



Digital Strategy 2024-2028

Why we need a digital strategy.

Growing the economy, improving housing, cleaner and safer neighbourhoods, net zero: Burnley Council's priorities for the borough are wide ranging and require long-term planning and investment. Our digital strategy needs to help the council deliver on these priorities more quickly and more effectively.

In today's digital era, citizens increasingly expect seamless, personalised digital government services on par with their experiences as digital consumers. At the same time, the council has limited budgets to work with.

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy requires the council to deliver significant savings to achieve a balanced budget. Use of transformation reserves to deliver digital service improvement must, therefore, achieve efficiency gains as well as improvements in user experience. In other words, investments must reduce our costs or help to free up staff time for other higher value tasks.

There are benefits to this: if we invest in technology that helps our staff to direct and orchestrate their workloads without recourse to repetitive data entry, we might also see an increase in job satisfaction which in turn supports the retention and development of talented staff.

This strategy describes where we will invest in new technology, how we intend to bring data together for actionable insight, how we will grow and upskill our staff, and how we will encourage all parts of the council to innovate using digital services.

Our vision for digital services

By 2028, Burnley Council will be a recognised regional leader in delivering seamless, user-centred digital services. Our technology infrastructure will help residents, businesses, community partners, and staff to thrive.

Our approach to digital change

- We'll deliver digital change in a consistent but adaptable way. A digital change Playbook will set out roles and responsibilities and encourage teams to lead change projects that impact them in a collaborative way.
- We will review our learning and development plan to make sure staff are fully supported to upskill and will adopt the Local Government Association's Cyber, digital, data, and technology (CDDaT) skills framework.
- Our time and budget will be focused on improving high volume or high effort processes.
- Before we buy software, we'll always have a clear business case. This will include assessing all the pain points of the current service for residents and staff. We'll ask suppliers to explain how their products alleviate these pain points.

Objective 1- Easy to use digital services that are designed around our users' needs.

Our digital services will be based on what are customers need. We'll take a user-centred approach to design and maximise accessibility. We'll redesign our processes to pre-empt citizen and business requests and offer support early. For customers that could use digital services if supported, we will encourage them online at every contact, with signposts and offers to help grow their digital skills and confidence. For customers that cannot use digital services, we will always ensure that there are appropriate offline services to meet their needs.

Progress to 2024

- According to the Sitemorse capability index of local government sector websites, in Q1 2022, Burnley's website ranked 395th out of 403. By Q3 2024, it had jumped to 87th. It's hosted on a sustainable cloud server too, to help us meet our climate action objectives.
- We've increased our engagement with residents on their preferred social platforms: since February 2020 Facebook likes have increased by 79%.
- Between 2022 and 2023, there was 17% rise in customer satisfaction among digitally engaged customers.
- We've introduced an easy way to report problems: Love Clean Streets
- For higher volume transactions excluding revenues and benefits, the council has achieved the target of the last digital strategy of making 65% of transactions digital. This was achieved in 2022. In 2023 it reached 68%.
- Our strategic partner Liberata has implemented Retain Position in Queue to help manage customer demand and expectations when calling the council.
- Our end user device strategy has transformed mobile working capability.
- The Bereavement Team is developing a new digital service that provides its clients with a seamless experience from booking a burial to locating a gravesite. It also reduces administrative tasks.

Challenges

- The contract KPIs for our managed IT service no longer fully reflect the needs of council end users.
- The council's geographic information system is affordable but does not meet our needs. Management of spatial datasets is not joined up, and some core data that should be spatial is currently textual. This means searches are inefficient. This is a priority action as accurate and easy to share spatial data underpins other future system improvements.
- Our online payments system does not meet is not mobile friendly and does not offer the options of most modern businesses. This is priority improvement action.

Opportunities

- We have strong design and digital skills in the inhouse Graphics team. The team led the burnley.gov.uk redevelopment which was not only a technical achievement but also an economic win.
- Our strategic partner Liberata is working with us to get the most out of their investment in the Genesys platform; this will accelerate an AI, automation and multichannel engagement strategy in customer services. WhatsApp could become an integrated part of our customer service offer for example.

Objective 1 Year 1 Delivery Plan

Action	Key tasks	Timing
Burnley.gov.uk improvement	Web accessibility audit	Annually
Review options for improved online payments	Learn from other councils and implement a feasible and low risk alternative to the current solution in at least one service.	Q1 24/25
Spatial data improvement project	Pre-market engagement for GIS, and agree procurement route and data management	Q1 24/25
Voice Bot signposting project	Roll out starting with waste and env health	Q1 24/25
Omnichannel strategy options	Review options as part of contract review	Q1 24/25
Burnley.gov.uk improvement	Commercial Waste pages review	Q2 24/25
HR system review	Consider business case for alternatives	Q3 24/25
Voice Bot development	Support efforts to reduce agent handling time using bot transcripts and dynamic knowledge management to assist Right First-Time approach	Q3 24/25
Community Engagement strategy	Review of communications and engagement channels	Q3 24/25
PlotBox implementation	Benefits fully realised	Q4 24/25
Iken implementation	Benefits fully realised	Q4 24/25
Financial system review	Review complete	Q2 25/26

1. Objective 2- Smart systems that join up data, automate more, and support data driven decision making.

We'll consolidate our digital estate to concentrate our skills, maximise the use of features, and reduce maintenance costs and other overheads. We'll reduce and automate the steps needed in customer transactions to make things quicker and more reliable, leveraging all the automation possibilities available from our investment in digital. We'll make it easier to draw insights from the data we hold to improve services.

Progress

- Following the redesign of burnley.gov.uk, we now use tools to assess the useability, speed and performance of the website.
- An end-of-life database for managing Freedom of Information Requests has been replaced by an in-house team using existing systems. The replacement system involved using AI to automate the allocation of jobs in order to free up staff for other tasks. The pilot process ensured that a member of staff is always "in the loop" to check the AI.
- There are many other examples of the council leveraging existing tools to quickly develop new services: for example, integration of our online forms with M365 for new application processes.
- The council's M365 adoption score is higher than the average of its peers.
- Use of GOV.UK Notify is now routine. It is a cost-effective way to let people know about online services and to remind them to take action.

Challenges

- The outsourcing of services makes joining up data more complex. For example, it is a manual effort to update the contact centre with back-office service information.
- Maintenance of the current system for planning, Environmental health and private sector housing (built environment and regulatory services) is complex and often creates issues.
- The ASB team does not have an adequate case management system. This is a priority action.
- Current systems have APIs which are costly, difficult to maintain, and come with limitations in how they can be used. This means data does not flow seamlessly around systems. The APIs for the current online booking system for the existing CRM for pest control and bulky collections will no longer be maintained by the supplier from September 2024. This is a risk to day-to-day operations so urgent action is needed.
- Performance data can be difficult to extract from systems and often involves manual data input to create management dashboards for example.
- There is limited internal capacity to introduce major change in digital services.

Opportunities

- While capacity is limited, all services have knowledgeable and skilled staff with experience of process change and system administration. Consolidation of skills and experience around fewer systems could help grow capacity over the medium to long term.
- The contract for built environment and regulatory services ends in 2025 and we are on a rolling annual contract for online forms and CRM. This creates an opportunity to invest in the latest automation technologies that also simplify how data is used in end-to-end processes and as well as supporting knowledge consolidation. Efficiencies can be achieved in data input, document management, and statutory consultation processes. It is also an opportunity to significantly improve "onsite" mobile working- for example inspections of

businesses and properties. It is also an opportunity to invest in case management for the ASB team and in a more sustainable online booking system.

- Further opportunities to reduce costs associated with resident consultations and engagement by using Gov.Notify to its full extent.
- The council has not previously secured external funding for digital transformation; there is the potential, especially as Government has committed to exploring the use of AI in the public sector, to develop “oven ready” business cases should funding become available.

Objective 2 Year 1 Delivery Plan

Ref	Action	Key tasks	Timing
1	Built Environmental and Regulatory Services/Case and customer Mgt Solution	Procurement	Q1 24/25
2	M365 review	App usage and licensing report prepared	Q2 25/26
3	Business Process review	Scheduled to fit with future procurements or high volume/high pain priorities	Q2 24/25
4	Staff development plan	Implement playbook approach and staff development plan	Q2 24/25
5	Review Love Clean Streets	Extension decision	Q1 25/26
6	Built Environmental and Regulatory Services/Case and customer Mgt Solution	Go live milestones achieved	Q1 25/26
7	M365 review	App usage and licensing report prepared	Q2 25/26
8	Business Process review	Robotic Process Automation/Bot transaction options considered	Q2 25/26
9	Waste Services processes	Specify “in cab” solutions as part of new waste contract	Q4 25/26
10	In house service automation	Robotic Process Automation/Bot transaction capability review	Q4 26/27

2. Objective 3- Infrastructure that is resilient.

Our reliance on technology means the impact of it going wrong goes way beyond inconvenience. For the council, large-scale disruption caused by malicious attack could become a major crisis which impacts our ability to deliver services. While we're vigilant against cyberattacks, we must acknowledge the inherent risks associated with aging IT infrastructure. Systems nearing their end-of-life pose compatibility and reliability challenges. Updating outdated software and replacing failing hardware are crucial steps to mitigate these risks and to ensure the smooth operation of our digital ecosystem.

Progress up to 2024

- Cyber treatment plan delivered on schedule and the council has so far proven resilient to malicious attack.
- Staff vigilance of phishing has increased.
- Adoption of MS Teams Calls has significantly improved back-office telephony and business resilience.
- Replacement of old desktops with laptops since 2021.
- There has been a significant reduction in Helpdesk calls since 2022.
- Replacement of highest risk "on premise" system got underway at the start of 2024.

Challenges

- Councils are reporting an increase in cyber-attacks. If a council's systems are compromised, the financial cost and damage to reputation are very high.
- Long term funding for cyber security is currently uncertain.

Objective 3 Year 1 Delivery Plan

Action	Key tasks	Timing
Cyber awareness training	Training completed by staff	Ongoing
Cyber Assessment Framework	Submit grant bid and join workshops	Q1 2024/25
Removal of information security red risks	All red risks removed	Q1 24/25
Review cyber treatment plan	Review impact and plan future investment	Q4 24/25
Device replacement programme	Add to capital budget for future laptop replacement	Q4 24/25
Review label use in 365	Update policies, engage staff, then review use	Q4 24/25
Mobile Device Management review	Update policies, engage staff, then review use.	Q4 24/25

3. KPIs

- Self/Contact centre ratio
- Citizen sentiment and feedback on the ease of accessing online services.
- Number of business processes reviewed and remediated annually.
- Levels of use of Microsoft 365 apps
- Staff satisfaction with tools available to them
- Delivery of defined annual efficiency targets linked to digital enablers.
- Overall reduction in Line of Business systems used in the council, with commensurate reduction in IT application support.
- Reduced calls to the IT Service Desk
- Proportion of IT Service Desk contacts which are 'incidents'.