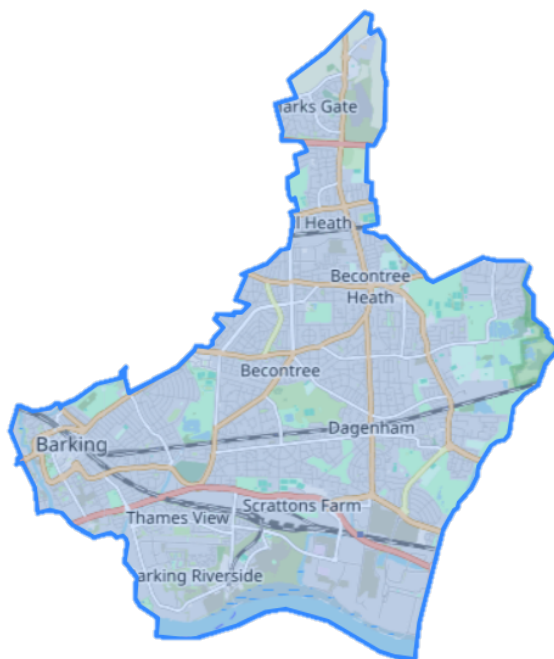


London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Digital, Data and Technology Strategy 2025 to 2028





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Foreword

I am very pleased to set out our technology and digital strategy that reflects the Council's commitment to delivering the best outcomes for residents, by using modern Digital, Data and Technology solutions in delivering its services and interactions with residents and customers.

Our ambition is to be a digitally inclusive Council where customers can interact with us in a way that is not only efficient and effective but in a way that is aligned with the way they would like to access services in the modern technological world we all live in.

We see technology as a key enabler in supporting the future aims of the Council and driving through value-for-money in the financially challenging times it faces.

It's abundantly clear that the implementation of AI will fundamentally change the way many of our services interact with Residents. We believe we can use this technology to deliver a better,

more responsive and more inclusive experience for residents interacting with our services, whilst also improving performance, lowering the cost of delivering services. However, these changes and benefits will not deliver themselves and we expect the change journey to be challenging and take several years to complete.

Introduction

The context for this new strategy is a world where technological opportunities and threats are emerging at an unprecedented rate. Alongside these phenomena are broader political and geopolitical developments, ranging from rapidly fluctuating economic policies between superpowers that are reshaping markets and impacting national economies, plans, and budgets on a global scale. These changes also affect the UK, driving the levels of funding available to local government to deliver vital services and evolving the scope and scale of services delivered. The impact of devolution and the emerging changes to the way key local partners such as local

authorities, health, education, police, and fire services work together is significant.

As a UK local government organization, we cannot control the wider context. Therefore, it is vital that we invest wisely in technology and are ready to adapt to the changing environment and circumstances. We strive for excellence through an agile approach to supporting the vital services provided by the council, efficiently adopting digital, data, and technology services.

The Council is guided in this by aligning with the Government Digital Blueprint set out in January 2025 and by continually engaging with other London boroughs through the London office of Technology and innovation and finally through the use of external benchmarking and advisory services.

Our vision is that Barking & Dagenham will use technology (including AI) to underpin the way it works and to drive better resident outcomes, through access to excellent digitally enabled and efficient services, supported by staff

using modern workplace technology, resulting in a borough that is truly digital.

This strategy will enable the Council's key Neighbourhoods strategy by enabling easy digital interaction with residents regardless of location

Our Digital Journey so far

At the introduction of a new strategy, it's worthwhile to take a short look at what has been achieved under the previous strategy. This strategy was written in early 2021 and predated the current explosion in possibilities due to the introduction of generative AI.

Digital Journey since 2021 strategy



Theme 1: Citizen Interaction

- Re-built the Council website improving structure, and quality of our digital content.
- Introduced a new customer portal and CRM solution using completely cloud-based technology reducing cost and improving capability and flexibility to deliver digital resident services.

Theme 2: Employee Interaction & Tools

- Replaced our Oracle ERP system including Finance, HR and budget management, providing better flexibility and reduction in operating cost.
- Upgraded the Councils laptops to Windows 11 with modern security and supporting infrastructure ensuring that staff continue to have the necessary tools to do their work.
- Improved the integration between our spatial GIS data and operational services leading to operational improvements across services.
- Improved and evolved IT training including the annual Information Governance and Cyber awareness training

Theme 3 Workflow, Efficiency & Automation

- Built internal CRM services providing improved case management and management of workflow in several internal services.
- Introduced technology to improve workflow in internal services and between systems

Theme 4: Data, Analytics & Business Intelligence

- Renewed the OneView platform used for Insight & Analytics across many areas in the Council
- Given access to a single view of the resident to a range of frontline teams enabling more holistic and preventative work
- Developed our data driven proactive outreach approach to supporting vulnerable people through our Neighbourhoods model. This started with a range of debt pilots and has now moved into using predictive analytics to predict risk of homelessness and offering support

Five pillars of the 2025 - 2028 DDaT Strategy in Summary



Digital First

Customers can find the information or undertake transactions with the Council without the need for human interaction on a 24/7 basis at a time and place that suits them. Human interaction with the Council happens only where it is truly needed.

Efficient

Using technology to drive efficiency in staff productivity and core processes. Maximise what we have already - training & continuous improvement are key. Building skills, capability and culture to continuously innovate our business processes. Identify where we need to do more to underpin the Council's other core strategies.

Data Driven

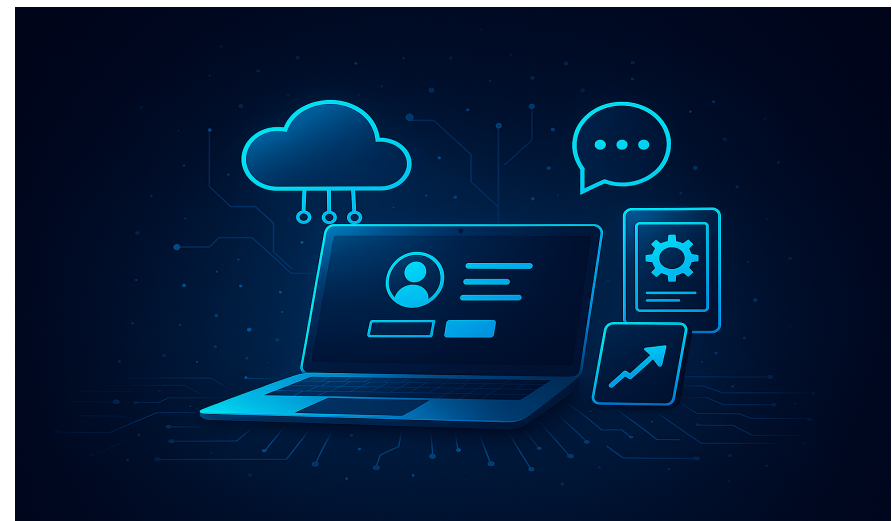
Managing our data and building data systems, capabilities and skills to enable improvements in service across the Council using a common data platform approach.

Ethical & Digitally Inclusive

Understand where residents do not have digital access and how we can assist them if we can. Enabling digital first communities, Supporting the digitally disadvantaged to close the gaps. Ensuring that we take an ethical approach to delivery of our services.

Secure

Continue to ensure that our Cyber defences and compliance with data protection law means that our residents can be confident in dealing digitally with the Council.



Pillar 1: Digital First

The Council will transition all transactional resident contact to be digital wherever this is possible, with customers able to access services 24/7 in their language of choice.

Our resident-facing services will primarily utilize digital channels such as telephony, web, email, and social media, all supported by AI to facilitate conversational and user-friendly interactions. Initial contact, general inquiries, and many straightforward transactions will be fully delivered through AI-supported digital channels and agents. Human expertise will be reserved for residents with more complex needs or vulnerabilities who may struggle with the technology.

We strive to move all customer-facing services to AI and digital solutions for routine and transactional activities, leaving human interaction for

In 2024 the Council introduced AI technology to its website to improve resident experience by helping people to find what they are looking for with simple conversational requests rather than needing to navigate a complex website. This has been highly successful and has led to further improvements & strategies in the 9 months since it went live.

situations where it is truly needed.

We aim to minimize bureaucracy within these processes, making the

process of accessing relevant information, advice and guidance as well as statutory and other services as straightforward as possible.

Wherever feasible, we will transition from print and post to digital communications. Many of our customers prefer this method, as it is more environmentally friendly and significantly more cost-effective.

Digital tools will be introduced to improve information gathering and interaction with residents when accessing and signing up for services. This will eliminate the need for paper-based record-keeping and speed up many processes.

The Council will explore technology to support residents in living healthier and more independent lives, such as movement monitoring for vulnerable residents in their homes, use of IOT monitoring technology for council properties to track and support remediation of conditions leading to potential mould, damp or other environmental concerns.

Investigate and potentially trial technology that works with our current systems using remote sensing to better understand the conditions of our properties and buildings, for example, using optical imaging and drawing generation technologies to inform investment decisions in our built environment.

Collaborate with our partners to understand where AI can better support our collaborative and interactive processes.



Pillar 2: Efficient

The Council will utilize digital tools and AI capabilities to enhance productivity, allowing staff to focus on value-adding activities and reducing time spent on administrative and repetitive tasks where viable digital or AI solutions exist.

This approach will integrate with the Council's core systems rather than replace them entirely. As contracts expire, we will consider replacements that offer adequate benefits, a strong business case, and alignment with relevant procurement regulations.

Driving Efficiency

We will review core business processes to ensure they are fit for purpose and that

In early 2025, the Council has introduced AI technology to improve productivity around a range of tasks from supporting the production of complex assessments through to summarisation and action taking from meetings. This in-house developed capability is highly flexible and cost effective.

supporting technology enhances efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and compliance. Core business applications will integrate and interface with each other as needed.

AI tools will support record-keeping, note-taking, and complex document and assessment processes, while skilled human staff will always make the final decisions on how we support residents. The Intranet will be continually improved to ensure staff have seamless access to the information they need, with guaranteed information integrity.

We will review the digital tools and equipment that staff use daily to ensure they are modern and align with our technology vision, service needs, and ethical values.

Sustainable Productivity Improvement

We will review existing software solutions to ensure the Council is making the best use of the tools and capabilities we already have. We will build digital capabilities to implement new workflows that simplify existing tasks and develop robust training programs to equip our workforce with the necessary digital skills and knowledge.

The Council will explore the use of AI tools and orchestration with its Digital Resident Interaction and other developments to support the many assessments the Council carries out each year, as solutions become available.

Continue developing staff to ensure they build capability and confidence in using new digital tools as they become available.

Adopt a culture of continuous improvement for systems, processes, and services to enhance or sustain efficiency and productivity in an ever-changing technological landscape.

Use AI tools to interact with the Council intranet, enabling staff to quickly access information and guidance, allowing them to focus on resident needs.

Pillar 3: Data Driven

The Council will maximize the use of its data, treating it as a valuable asset. We will adopt a robust approach to data management and identify opportunities to provide meaningful intelligence and insights that support service delivery and enhance outcomes for residents.

Data Management & Capability

We will create a highly capable, secure, well-governed, and cost-effective unified data platform. This platform will be future proofed to meet the Council's data integration, storage, and analytics needs across all services. It will enable rapid integration and analysis of data from various sources within the Council, generating valuable service insights and driving better outcomes. We aim to eliminate multiple versions of the same data,

In summer 2025, the Council has developed and is taking live a single view of property model for housing stock, this sources data from several systems and enables staff a better view of the assets we manage.

reduce the effort needed to move data between systems, and automate the import of relevant data into the platform. By

simplifying interactions and using a single data and analytics skillset across the Council, we will create tools and processes that allow staff to access the data they need for better decision-making at the right time. For leaders and commissioners, this could be in the form of dashboards, while for frontline officers, it could provide a single view of the resident or family.

Insight & Intelligence Tools

We will expand the Council Data Platform as needed to better understand resident needs, manage our services, and respond to increasing regulatory compliance requirements. The data architecture will be flexible, serving as the base system for a range of analytical tasks or products. We will enhance our ability to share data with external partners, such as health and central government services, to provide greater insights and maximize outcomes for residents.

We will begin to build simple user interfaces so that staff beyond analytical teams can directly access the data they need. Additionally, we will develop functionality for advanced analytical techniques, such as predictive analytics, and ensure that data governance tools are in place to make the right data available to the right staff.

This capability will be at the core of a data led prevention approach to facilitate the Council and it's partners in the Neighbourhoods strategy in composing services designed to prevent or reduce the need for high cost acute services.

The approach will enhance the speed and efficiency of data processing across the Council, improving data accessibility where needed, providing tools to staff to facilitate real-time data insights that help identify trends not immediately evident.

Pillar 4: Ethical & Digitally Inclusive

Ethical

The Council will establish Ethical Panels to:

Include resident input at the digital design stage, ensuring we listen to and address their views and concerns on our AI, Digital, and Data journey.

Ensure the ethical use of resident data as we design, acquire, and implement new technologies and methods for delivering services.

Ensure that ethical considerations around the adoption of new technologies are always addressed at the highest levels within the Council before approval and adoption of new technology.

Inclusivity

We will implement programs to address digital exclusion, supporting residents in accessing digital technologies. We will recognize and address digital exclusion when encountered, working with partners and community channels to provide skills training, practical assistance, and access to equipment and services. This will be addressed through a number of Council and partner services including using the Council's buying power to secure social value from the many technology contracts the Council procures

Building for Inclusion

We will design our services to support residents with vulnerabilities or those unable to interact digitally. Vulnerable residents needing human assistance will receive it, while digitally able residents will be guided to use available digital channels.

The Council will seek to build service interactions around AI speech capability as an option, ensuring multi-language support and 24/7 interactions where needed.

The Council will procure or develop specific channels to better meet the needs of residents with vulnerabilities, such as hearing or sight impairments where this is feasible.

Continuously monitor and address digital exclusion within our population and where possible, evolve solutions to emerging issues.

The Council will seek opportunities to generate funding and support from enterprises for new digital inclusivity initiatives.



Pillar 5: Secure

Digital technology is now deeply integrated into all aspects of our lives. The loss of digital services and capabilities can hinder the efficient operation of services, or in some cases, halt them entirely. Additionally, the Council faces constant threats from hostile actors aiming to disrupt, defraud, or destroy vital systems, services, and data that are essential for providing services to residents.

Cyber Security

The Council will continuously assess cyber risks in all our technology decisions and supply chains to ensure the Council's approach to cyber risk is informed and balanced. We will adopt innovative and effective methods and technologies to detect, assess, and mitigate cyber vulnerabilities, threats, and attacks as they emerge.

To support the Council services in this high threat environment, the Council will continue its approach of training all staff in cyber threats and risks to information on an annual basis, the training curriculum will be continually reviewed to maintain relevance and effectiveness

Information Governance

We will ensure that the Council makes the best use of its data in a legal and compliant manner. We will increase our capability to support services navigating the complexity of data stewardship in the evolving technology landscape. We will provide specialist training to Council staff responsible for processing our data and oversee the implementation of practices and technology to reduce the likelihood of preventable accidental data breaches. All data sharing arrangements will be underpinned by strict cyber security protocols.

Specific Cyber Security & Information aims

Conduct large-scale exercises to rehearse the ability of services to survive a successful cyber-attack causing significant damage or loss of systems and data for an extended period.

Implement technology to support staff in securely and compliantly sharing personal information with external partners, such as health services, and with residents.

Deliver specialist training to staff responsible for procuring and implementing services that require systematic data sharing between the Council and third parties.

Regularly update our cyber security awareness training solutions to incorporate evolving and changing cyber security threats.

Continuously evolve cyber security tools and capabilities to align with emerging threats.

Establish a comprehensive cyber security governance framework to align with changing regulations and address emerging cyber security threats.

Adopt the Cyber Assessment Framework to take a risk-led approach to cyber risks as they emerge, in line with government best practices.

Delivering the vision

Modern technology and the use of data will underpin the delivery of the Council's plan and other key strategies. The DDaT strategy will consolidate these needs into an overarching framework, implemented through the five key pillars. Each pillar will be supported by a structured programme of works and projects aligned with service directorates and the corporate transformation programme. Many of these projects will have elements that touch on several or all the pillars mentioned above.

To ensure that the delivery projects are well governed, the implementation of the strategy will be overseen by the Council's DDaT (Digital data and technology) board, the Transformation board and the executive committee of the Council. This ensures that prioritisation, alignment with broader Council objectives and funding are all aligned and that the work can be robustly monitored for performance against business cases.

The Council will collaborate closely with trusted advisors to ensure that only robust solutions delivering measurable outcomes against this strategy are adopted and invested in. Collaboration and close working relationships with key partners, both internally and externally, will be a fundamental theme underpinning the five pillars.

