Overview & Scrutiny

Digital, Customer Service and Innovation

Smart Neighbourhoods

People Powered Digital Experience

Digital Inclusion Closing the Gap

A Well-Run Council

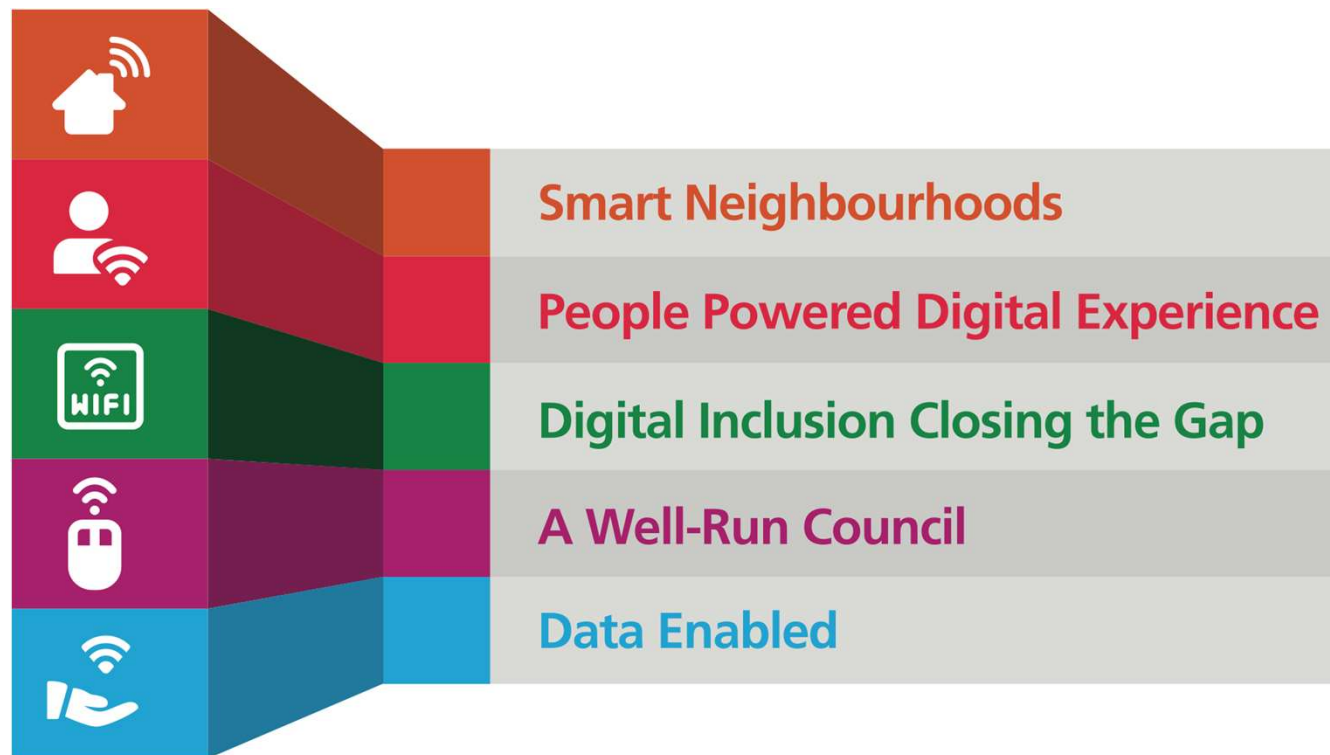Data Enabled

Southwark Council

Overview

- Update on Digital Strategy and key programmes

- How technology is deployed across key services

- Digital Inclusion – developing access, empowering communities

- Robotic process automation, Generative AI, understanding its use assisting council services

- Update on the contact centre, current performance & winter pressures

- Complaints update – responsiveness and progress on improving accessibility

Digital Strategy

- Our priority is to improve the services and opportunities we offer to the people of Southwark. Digital needs to be at the front and centre of how we achieve this.

- Continually improving how we manage our technology and digital services is crucial if we are to respond to local needs, operate with reduced budgets, and keep up with changes in the technology world.

- The Strategy provides a clear plan for how we can build responsive Digital Services that meets the requirements of our residents.

- Together with Southwark 2030 and the Council plan, the strategy will help us to create a Well-Run Council to support our staff in accessing modern workplace technology and providing the skills to enable them to deliver services as efficiently as possible. Ensuring that our services remain focused on user requirements and that we make the required investment in technology to keep our services accessible and secure.

Digital Strategy: Five Pillars

- Our Digital Strategy agreed to 5 key areas, known as pillars:

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Smart Neighbourhoods

We are committed to making Southwark one of the best-connected boroughs in London by using emerging technology.

- Internet of things: IoT – The GLA have awarded Southwark £25k for damp and mould detection sensors in housing

  - Used to proactively find damp and mould cases before serious problems occur in the property,
  - Sensors to monitor water hygiene to prevent Legionella,
  - Sensors to monitor noise levels to assist management of disturbance cases
  - Fire door sensors to ensure fire doors are closed and working appropriately.

- Dark fibre network – GLA are supporting Southwark with £1m SIP funding for dark fibre (installing the cabling to connect housing) infrastructure across the Borough to improve connectivity for residents.

People Powered Digital Experience

Our aim is to improve user experience, by reviewing how we deliver services to allow residents who choose to self-serve to have a seamless digital interaction with us.

New Telephony System - estimated launch: March 2025 - a more advanced system with the capability of meeting future requirements of the council. It will provide:

- Optimise customer & employee experiences with one view of customer information on agents' screens.
- Optimise and control queues by supervisors to manage call volumes and call flows etc
- scalable – to other departments and other channels e.g. website
- Realise value faster with AI easy to deploy, to assist in Customer Service Officer responses to residents in real-time.
- It helps personalise engagement on any channel with humans and AI bots and move across those channels seamlessly ensuring quicker responses for residents.
- Optimise with intelligent automation and embedded API that delivers customer information between systems and allows better Management information reports with integrated data.

People Powered Digital Experience

New Website - launch: November 2025. LocalGov Drupal: The Ideal Choice for Southwark's New Website

Enhanced User Experience
• The new website features a modern design, improved navigation, and enhanced functionality, making it easier for residents to find the information they need.

Community-Driven Development
• LocalGov Drupal is built by councils for councils, fostering a lively community dedicated to continuous improvement. This collaboration ensures that the platform remains up-to-date with the latest features and best practices.

Cost-Effective and Flexible
• Being an open-source platform, LocalGov Drupal reduces the cost of building and maintaining the website by up to 80%, allowing Southwark to allocate resources more efficiently.

Improved Search and Navigation
• The website includes a customised search feature that helps users confidently navigate the site. The new "popular tasks" section on the homepage ensures that the most frequently accessed pages are easily accessible.

Interactive Features
• The "Where I Live" geospatial feature allows residents to input their postal code and access information about their local councillors, nearest libraries, leisure centres, and bin collection days.

Compliance and Inclusivity
• The platform adheres to the Equality Act 2010 and promotes inclusivity and sustainability.

Seamless Integration
• The new architecture integrates seamlessly with Microsoft Azure and Power Platform, enabling smooth interoperability between frontend services and backend systems.

Closing The Gap: Digital Inclusion

Tacking digital exclusion and ensuring residents have the tools, skills and technology they need.

- The TDS strategy is aligned with the Greater London Authority (GLA)'s Digital Access Mission, which aims for every Southwark resident to have access to a fast and stable internet connection by 2025.

- Plan to provide digital hubs and support in libraries and voluntary organisations. These hubs will offer residents access to digital services and assistance, ensuring that those who need help are not left behind as more people move online.

- Services are currently delivered through a variety of channels. In addition to our 24hr contact centre, online services and self - service offerings, Customer Services offer supported services to vulnerable residents through our Telecare and SMART services, residents can also contact us in person.

- In November 2024 TDS launched the Springboard platform. Springboard has over 1000 free courses available to residents to upskill and expand their digital and life skills and will be part of our digital inclusion offering going forward, supplementing the Digital Unite and Learn My Way platforms.

- In 2025 - Recycling Southwark Council devices for community groups in line with laptop replacement programme.

A Well-Run Council - Projects

We aim to meet the evolving needs of our residents while empowering our staff to adapt to new ways of working

- Roll-out of Microsoft 365 tools and Generative AI

- Cyber Security training for all staff

- A full-council laptop refresh with biometrics for higher security

- Digital skills academy and training available to all staff

- **Digitally enabling** front line workers to allow them more time to engage directly with residents rather than having to return to the office to complete administrative work. Access to email, intranet and Council information.

Data Enabled

Our vision: Intelligent data driven decisions, integrate more data sets, including more services, single view of the resident – One Council, One Platform

Integration, Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Generative AI

- Developing the approach to more automated services – web chat, form integration, AI, SMS
- High volume/high transaction areas – progress in developing integrated forms
- **Council Tax Support** - 49,057 Universal credit notifications received for customers of which 75% fully automated
- **Changes in circumstances** – 47,802 notifications – 76% automated
- **New claims** – 58% automated
- **Council Tax** movers in and out/student discounts/single occupiers/arrears follow up
- E.g. Apr to Aug 15,930 council tax forms – 79% no manual intervention
- Directly resulting in efficiencies within the service.

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Developing automation innovation work underway

- **Invoice payments automated –** August 24 AI deployed to check for duplication, missing information and conduct checks. 24,000 checks completed currently of 60,000 invoices. Efficiencies generated.

- **Automating customer profiles in finance** – project due to go live in December automating customer profiles – name/addresses, bank account info, will be read by the bot and automatically updated into the finance system, 50 to 100 profiles per week.

Contact Centre & Customer Service

- Corporate Contact Centre 24-hour service
- Receives approx. 400k to 500k calls per annum
- Gateway for 44 Council services – including high volume areas, repairs, Council Tax, Environment services

Performance

- Leadership decision to maintain performance – significant pressures in the winter particularly relating to housing services.
- 2023/4

Contact Centre Calls	Status	Target	2023-2024	2024-2025
CC Number of Calls		-	403,941	215,258
CC Call Answered		-	357,212	199,506
Average Wait Time	YTD	(00:05:00)	(00:03:27)	(00:01:37)
Overall Answer Rate		80%	88.43%	92.68%
Calls Answered within 300 Secs		70%	74.19%	85.77%