



Creating Futures Together

Digital Strategy 2021 - 2024

Introduction

This digital strategy details the approach we will take to enhance our digital services over the next three years. The final section of the report looks beyond three years; and will form part of our digital aspirations into the future. Due to the speed of change we have only committed to three years, as we want to keep our plans flexible to respond to those changes.



The digital strategy is designed to improve and respond to the needs of the organisation, putting people at the fore front; both those to whom we provide services and those who work for and with us. This strategy delivers our strategic aims and the table shown in Appendix B not only shows how each project links to those aims it also links to the digital aims detailed in this strategy.

Vision

We are a people focused organisation, whether that be through the homes and services we provide for residents or the environment we create for our employees. The corporate plan details the strategic aims that underpin the organisation:

Strategic Aims:

- **Excellent Services** – we will deliver high quality services to all our customers and partners. We will provide considerate customer services, empowering housing services and effective repairs.
- **Quality Homes** – we will invest in new and existing homes by maintaining high standards of repairs and improvements to our current homes and developing new homes to meet the needs of local people.
- **Sustainable Business** – we will strengthen our business by continually improving our governance, increasing the value of our work, seeking ways of joint working with our partners and investing in our staff.

*Technology does tasks,
people do people*

At the end of the term of this strategy our staff will be engaging with residents and colleagues through multiple channels. They will be focused on a people service that delivers the best outcomes to residents and they are supported by user-friendly, integrated systems. We will have an app through which residents can book repairs, pay rent, move home and give feedback.



Present

The pandemic of 2020 has made us realign our digital priorities, accelerating some of our aims to allow us to operate effectively in a different way. The requirements of social distancing and restrictions on human interaction have required us to adapt our ways of working to allow us to continue to engage with our residents, as well as having to look at different ways for our employees to work.



Much of this was planned for the slightly longer term, however 'lock down' accelerated some of our plans albeit they were implemented very quickly and not always delivered in the best way. Therefore, we need to build on this to allow the positive outcomes to grow, (digital viewings and sign ups, noise app) and refine the not so good ways of working into better arrangements, such as the agile working/ office change project and MS Teams. Templer HomeBuild have already progressed well with MS Teams and this offers more opportunities for improved communications between Templer HomeBuild and Teign Housing.

The Tenants Forum and Service Board have gone from no or limited digital activity to full virtual meetings within 4 months.

Drivers

The key driver for this strategy is how we continue to deliver our same corporate values in a world where digital delivery has become the norm and the speed of change continues to accelerate. We are not intending to become a digital champion for the sector, but we already know that unlike other service areas such as banking, hospitality and retail, we do not offer enough channels through which our residents can engage with us.

Our service delivery is good but it also relies largely on face to face or telephone contact, and whilst these continue to be an important route through which we engage with residents we can also look to offer services through webchat, social media and an app; this is now the norm in many commercial businesses e.g. banks, supermarkets, retail.

Engaging, motivating and recruiting employees is another key consideration. Many of the staff have now realised that an agile working environment can allow them to work well and achieve a different work/life balance, and again we want to build on this and ensure that we have the

appropriate technology to support them. We can look to recruit in a different way, for different skills, for roles that focus on the added value of engaging with people rather than undertaking processing.

Whilst we will look to create efficiency from the move to digital services this is not with an intention to reduce the number of employees. Currently we have some disconnect between process, systems and people and there is still too much focus on paper and admin; we need the technology to do the process, and then we will move employees to more customer focused roles, whether this be through activities such as webchat or, when the environment allows, more customer facing arrangements. Smarter digital technologies will also allow us to improve back-office functions, for example focussing on analysing research about our residents to better target services, rather than time-consuming data processing. Training and skills development will underpin the new ways of working.



Residents and digital

We have been gathering data, in various ways, to understand how our residents transact from a digital perspective and what they want.

In the Census 2020 the Internet usage question asked households if they use the Internet at home, outside of the home or not at all, 1791 households responded to this question:

- **1116 households (62% of respondents to the question) reported that they use the Internet at home**
- **342 households use the Internet outside the home and 48 of those (3%) use it outside the home only**
- **627 households (35%) do not use the Internet**
- **567 would be happy to take part in further research, of whom 81 do not use the Internet.**



Considering lead tenants only, age impacts the likelihood of Internet use at home. Under the age of 54 Internet use ranges from 85% to 93%. This falls slightly to 68% from ages 55 to 64 and drops significantly to 39% after age 65. The presence of one or more disabilities does not impact on household Internet use at home.

In the STAR survey* of 2019 (the survey had a 39% response rate overall) we found that phone (65%) and laptop or PC (64%) are equally popular ways for residents to access the Internet.

* HouseMark (the performance management service owned by National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing) uses this method to measure customer satisfaction in the Social Housing sector, and allows housing providers to compare and benchmark against each other to improve their services.

We asked customers what online services they use with other companies and what services they'd like to use online with Teign Housing. The most popular with other organisations is the ability to pay bills but with us, is the ability to report repairs or other tenancy issues:

Internet use with others / desired from Teign Housing



In the STAR survey we had 40% of respondents who don't use the Internet, of which 44% have no access and 58% don't want to use the Internet. Some respondents cited age or ill health as reasons for not being online. Considering just the respondents who don't use the Internet but didn't say they don't want to, the biggest barrier is a lack of confidence or skills (40% / 182 households), followed by the cost of equipment (26% / 137 households) and the cost of connection (21% / 118 households).

The pandemic very clearly impacted how our residents contacted us:

Business Support	2019/20	2020/21 to end July
Inbound communication by Telephone (%)	65.7%	14.3%
Inbound communication by Email (%)	32.8%	69.9%
Inbound communication by Webchat (%)	1.5%	15.9%

There have been dramatic changes in how customers contact Teign Housing. Telephone calls have fallen by 51%, email increased by 37% and webchat increased by 14%.

The pandemic also saw increases in Facebook followers (13% from April – July 2020), tenant portal registrations (20%) and email addresses held (5%); there has also been an increase in the number of users and visitors to our website.

Google Analytics (website)

	1 January to 2 December 2019 (11 months)	1 January to 31 August 2020 (8 months)	1 January to 2 December 2020 (estimated)
Users	20,840	16,426	22,586
Sessions	38,369	32,058	44,079
Pages per session	2.58	2.29	
Time per session	1 minute 45 seconds	1 minute 45 seconds	
Returning visitors	19.7%	21.7%	

If performance from January to August continues for the remainder of the year, we may see an increase of 8% on users and 15% on sessions, compared to last calendar year.

The pandemic is a very exceptional event and further monitoring will be needed to understand to what level behaviours will revert as time goes on.



SWOT

SWOT is a type of business analysis and it stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats, and so a SWOT Analysis is a technique for assessing these four aspects of our business.

As part of the digital leadership training Senior Management Team did a SWOT analysis to understand the potential impact for the organisation. The SWOT analysis is appended to this strategy (Appendix A).

The move to a digital future is a big step and with that comes some major challenges that will need to be considered:

➤ **Culture change:**

- how do we ensure that we take people with us, this includes the Board, staff and residents?
- how do we plan for future staffing – going forward the skills we want will be different?
- how do we retain the company feel and focus (the 'Teign' culture); the community-based housing provider that works well as a team?

➤ **Residents skills, resources and willingness** – we will not be digital by default but having said that we are already failing to serve those residents who want more digital engagement.

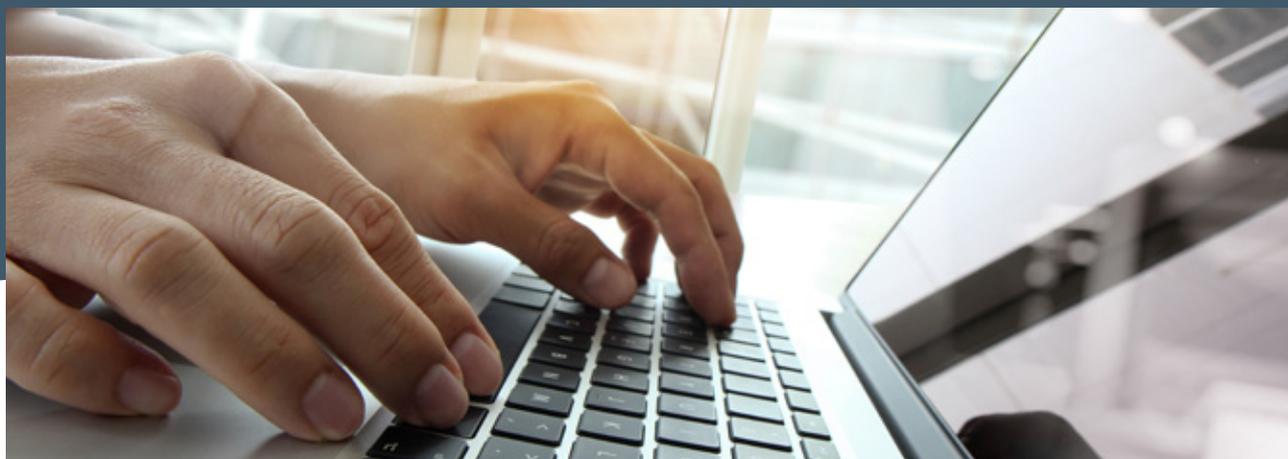
- **Competing resources** – we have finite resources and there are some significant challenges that we need to deliver including regeneration, development, decarbonisation and building safety. We must not underestimate the resources we will need to achieve what we want to do.
- **Consultation** – the pandemic has thrown our traditional ways of consulting into disarray and we need to find other ways that we can understand what is important, from a digital perspective, to our residents.
- **External environment** – connectivity can be an issue across our area of operation and is something that we can do little to change. This may limit what can be offered in some areas.

All of these are challenges that will need to be considered as we deliver our corporate plan but if we do not move forward with digitalisation then we run a bigger risk of falling behind in our service offer.

We have developed several projects that will start the digital change, and these are shown in on the last couple of pages of this document. Each of these is linked to the relevant corporate value and digital aim to ensure that our focus remains on the core purpose of being the best community-based housing provider that we can be.



Digital aims - key delivery areas



This strategy allows us to take the first steps in delivering outcomes differently, and the below are what we are seeking to achieve in key areas:

- **Employees** – flexible, adaptable working arrangements that allow them to manage their work/life balance. The skills and equipment to allow them to be mobile. People focused employment offer that allows us to attract the best recruits.
- **Residents** – they can engage with us how they want, and when they want. We provide customer focused service and solutions.
- **Environment** – we can minimise our impact on the planet.
- **Culture** – trust and encourage employees to manage their own time. Encourage collaboration, learning and innovation to enhance service delivery.

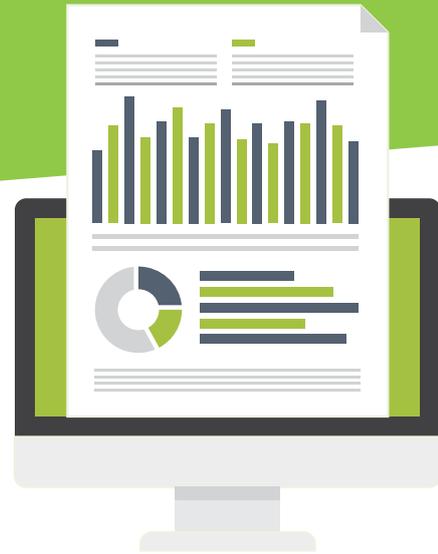
Our IT team and infrastructure will underpin our digital progress. We are currently working on changing and improving our legacy systems with the implementation of our new housing management system Civica CX and the move away from Citrix. We need to ensure that our IT platform is forward focused alongside being well maintained, and there will be digital champions for the key systems, who ensure that we maximise functionality and capability.

The use of technology needs to ensure that we improve the organisation through improving customer service, increasing accessibility, reducing processing time and/or increasing business sustainability.

Data strategy

We are much clearer now about why we collect data, how we will use it and how long we will retain it; major projects are supported by a Data Impact Assessment.

This needs to be developed further into a data strategy, that could also include our insight data, and ensures that the data we collect and retain is useful, providing insights with which we make decisions and instigate changes throughout the organisation.



We will develop a set of personas which will be broadly representative of both our colleague and customer audience. Each persona will share the same/similar characteristics such as those things that they aspire to have/to be or their even their behaviours/tendencies.

Examples of aspirations: To get a job, to achieve a professional qualification, to gain some basic skills (maths, english, digital), to enter shared ownership

Examples of behaviours: To transact digitally, to pay rent on time and in full, to be neighbourly, use doorstep lenders, accrue debts, to accrue savings

This data and personas will mean that we can proactively tailor and target campaigns and services accordingly.

Consultation

Changing how we provide services and how we engage will require extensive consultation both with residents and employees, and we are considering a range of methods to do this.

Residents:

- We will have conversations with our Tenants Forum.
- We will put some questions out on social media.
- We will run some Zoom focus groups.
- We have consulted our Tenant Forum, and we will utilise face to face and digital tool available to us regarding relevant digital projects.



Employees:

- We already have the information from the information from staff survey and the changes to agile working.
- We ran focused groups while working on the Agile working policy to understand the impact it would have on our staff
- We will use our Staff Forum to communicate changes and generate feedback.
- We will run regular communication updates.
- We will get feedback as the digital projects are introduced so that we can learn and adapt (agile project management).

Technology

We are in the process of upgrading and improving our IT systems to allow us to build improved service delivery in the future. The implementation of our Housing Management system has now successfully completed. We have a dedicated Health & Safety system and improved arrangements for managing meetings, risks and actions.

We have gone live with a cloud based telephony solution and we will undergo modern desktop transformation, moving away from Citrix (our current IT environment), to a virtual environment, that will allow us to more effectively manage our mobile devices, enhance our web security and anti-virus arrangements; we will be able to share files more securely, work offline when required and start using Microsoft Teams. All of this allows us to create a better platform on which to build future functionality, along with generating cost reductions in ongoing support and maintenance costs.



Partners

A further consideration will be the opportunity to integrate and collaborate with partners when making digital enhancements. The most obvious of these will be the integration for Templer Homebuild and Ian Williams to reduce double handling and duplicate systems management and enhance integration. We are aware that Ian Williams are already undertaking significant IT changes. We also need to consider other key partners such as Teignbridge District Council, Devon Home Choice, Devon County Council, the police, social services and the NHS.

Financial

Changes in the way we work inevitably require a level of financial investment and whilst these may result in future cost savings; they will require initial investment.

The proposals appended to this report have not yet been fully costed, and the costs will be considered in advance of the budget setting for the year in which they will be incurred. The budget will then be put forward to the Board. The digital projects range in scale from minor enhancements on existing arrangements to a complete change of technology.

Teign Housing will approach the procurement of IT products keeping value for money in mind. Some projects may require specific approval due to the costs involved e.g. the move from analogue to digital for the sheltered housing alarm arrangements. It is likely that the requirement for revenue funding for IT will

increase while the capital will decrease; this is largely due to the move from hardware-based infrastructures to cloud based arrangements which are charged through licences. The business plan will also need to ensure that there are annual capital budgets to cover the cost of equipment refreshes and upgrades for staff.

We need to ensure that we provide the right support and skills training for our staff so that we can take them with us as we change to an enhanced digital environment.



Risks

Undoubtedly delivering a strategy of this scale has several risks but not least of all the fact that digital transformation will be ongoing and will become part of the continuous improvement for the organisation; some of the more specific risks are:

- **Focus on quality not quantity** – we want to deliver services that work well, so we need to ensure that each project stage is tried and tested before we roll it out to residents or employees.
- **Over promise and under deliver** – closely aligned to quality, we need to set realistic delivery targets each year.
- **Skills** – do we have the skills we need or want for the future; do we know this (unconscious incompetence)?
- **Traditional thinking, fear of change and pace of change** – enabling everyone to feel part of the changes will be important and may take time.
- **Conflicting priorities** – both financial and resources.
- **External influences** – there is little we can do about poor connectivity, however it may well be a barrier. More immediate issues may arise if aspirations for Templer Homebuild are limited by functionality or willingness in Ian Williams.
- **Do nothing** – this will mean that we are unable to deliver services in the way that some residents want and in the future this risk will increase as technology changes and becomes more accessible.





Longer term projects

This strategy has only looked at the next three years as technology is moving so rapidly that it is likely that we will need to consider the next stages by the end of year 2. We have given some thought to some of the longer-term projects that could enhance the business, and these include:

- **Remote devices** that can inspect properties such as under floors, in roof spaces or soil pipes or externally looking at roofs/chimneys etc. and send back data to Teign Housing to action.
- **Chatbots** – we have included this to start in year 2 of the project plan, and we may get some early wins from the new telephony arrangements, we will look to extend the use of Chatbots for first stage contact and then handing over more complex queries to a person.
- **Tracking your repair/complaint** – once you can arrange your service through an app, you can then track progress in the same way you can currently track a parcel.
- **Using virtual platforms** to engage people to help combat loneliness and isolation or improve accessibility for disabled people, for example community events such as bingo, coffee mornings, book clubs.
- **Intelligent homes** - sensor detectors in homes to detect lack of movement or trips and falls, changes in utilities (gas, electricity and water risk).
- **Digital tenancies** – a progression from sign up packs would be a full digital tenancy, with integration to a fully functioning app.

Digital strategy projects

Over the course of the next three years, Teign Housing has agreed to bring in the following changes, which will benefit our customers, stakeholders, and employees.

1. Virtual mapping of all our properties that allow us to use the data we keep in our Housing Management System, CX This will enable us to improve reporting and understand our communities and respond accordingly. It will also improve the accuracy of service charges and caretaking delivery.
2. Drones to be used for surveying and inspecting buildings. This will provide us with more accurate information, and cost less than setting up scaffolding. It will also be less intrusive for our tenants.
3. Digitise our pre void inspections so the process involves less paperwork, and all the data is put directly into CX, our Housing Management System, which help staff in the office to turn a property around faster for a new tenant.
4. Change our reporting programme, so that we can create more efficient and detailed reports, which will help the entire company manage their workload more effectively
5. Introduce a new HR system, which will improve our Human Resource Management enabling staff to self-service.
6. Introduce a new finance system that integrates with the new HR system, so that everything is connected and works seamlessly.
7. Automate the TeignCare Direct Debit facility to make it easier for our staff to manage the finances.
8. Create a My Teign Account mobile app where staff can pay their rent and request repairs as a starting point.
9. Create online forms for new tenants to easily and securely provide us with their information.
10. Upgrade our tenant portal, My Teign Account, so it's more user friendly as well as provide a new user guide, consider the inclusion of videos.
11. Roll out webchat to our Rents team, so that customers can contact us via a secure webchat with their rent queries.
12. Create a new sign up pack that is available as a digital version and a physical copy so that new tenants only receive one document with all the relevant information they need.

13. Automate our satisfaction survey, this will allow our staff to take more phone calls and make surveying less intrusive for our tenants.
14. TeignCare alarms to transition from analogue to digital, making them more reliable and secure.
15. Offer virtual chats for our TeignCare customers before installation.
16. Digital estate inspections, to improve the data and speed up reporting of community repairs.
17. Video recordings of our community events and surgeries, so that those who couldn't attend are not missing out.
18. Improve digital viewings and include our shared ownership properties, this would allow future tenants and buyers the chance to see the property before bidding on it.
19. Introduce a new system for our action plans which will improve corporate oversight so that we can achieve all the outcomes we want and improve.
20. Introduce video facility for complaints which will make it easier for tenants to voice their concerns and speak to our Resolutions Manager to solve issues before they require escalation.
21. Create a new intranet for our staff to allow for better communication across teams and departments following the launch of our Agile Working policy.
22. Implement a new resident engagement platform to allow more tenants to have their voice heard on various subjects.





Contact us

*Millwood House
Collett Way
Newton Abbot
TQ12 4PH*

 01626 322722

 customerhub@teignhousing.co.uk

 teignhousing.co.uk