

Carmarthenshire County Council

Digital Transformation Strategy 2017-2020

Digital Technology Strategy 2018-2021

Annual Progress Report 2021



carmarthenshire.gov.wales

Cyngor **Sir Gâr**
Carmarthenshire
County Council





"A Digitally enabled Carmarthenshire"

To achieve this bold vision, we must:

- Provide transactional services and information online in a user-friendly and inclusive way.
- Use technology to change the way traditional face-to-face services are delivered, enabling us to deliver effective and efficient services for our residents.
- Create a digital workforce which is agile, mobile and using the most appropriate technologies to support service delivery.
- Support our residents to use digital technology and enable access to technology for those that do not have it.
- Support our businesses in a digital economy.
- Use digital technology to work and collaborate with our partners seamlessly, including the effective sharing and use of data.
- Build a more flexible, agile and integrated technology infrastructure.
- Adopt a highly available, modern, and 'citizen centric' digital platform at the heart of our technology.
- Harness cloud environments to deliver technology anywhere, anytime for the organisation.
- Make significant improvements to productivity by harnessing new technology and devices for all our Councillors and Staff.
- Decommission our on-premises infrastructure and replace with virtual cloud technology where at all possible.
- Pursue a policy of converging and unifying our communications platforms to a single system.
- Collate, interrogate and extract value from data to facilitate organisational strategy, decision-making and service delivery.
- Make digital connectivity and bandwidth the foundation of our technology stack, for the organisation, elected members, citizens, and businesses.
- Facilitate and underpin collaboration locally, regionally and nationally through the intelligent deployment of technology.
- We will value, recognise and invest in the people and skills required to achieve the aims of this Strategy.

The projects identified within the Digital Transformation Strategy are designed to deliver the key objectives of the Corporate Strategy:



Annual Progress Report 2020

This annual progress report concludes our 1st Digital Transformation Strategy 2017-2020 and Digital Technology 2018-2021 strategies; of which the overarching strategy is our Digital Transformation Strategy.

Due to the challenges presented and required response due to the COVID pandemic, our 2nd strategy has had to be delayed by 1 year. This report covers both 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 updates. However, this delay has presented an opportunity to align our 2nd Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-2024 with our 2nd Digital Technology Strategy 2021-2024 going forward.



The **Digital Transformation Strategy** sets out the Council's strategic digital priorities and aspirations and outlines what we plan to do to achieve our vision for a Digital Carmarthenshire and why. Technology is becoming increasingly pervasive and ingrained across all sectors of industry and has become integrated into many aspects of our daily lives.

Carmarthenshire County Council needed a digital transformation strategy as digital technology and innovations have the potential to transform the county and the lives of our residents, businesses and communities as well as allowing the council to generate long-term saving and efficiencies.

The Authority will make use of appropriate emerging and existing technologies to facilitate and underpin service transformation, improvement and efficiencies.

We will adopt the Sustainable Development Principles of the Well Being Future Generations Act in our design and implementation of new digital technologies to assist us in delivering the Future Generations Well Being Objectives.

Underpinning primary Digital Transformation Strategy are our Digital Schools and Digital Technology Strategies. A separate annual progress report has been prepared for the Digital Schools Strategy, while the Digital Technology Strategy update is included as part of this combined progress report.



Our **Digital Technology Strategy** sets out the Authority’s digital technology priorities and aspirations over the same period. Its purpose is to identify the key technologies, innovations and initiatives that will facilitate and underpin the vision and delivery of the organisations existing and overarching Digital Transformation Strategy. The audience for this Strategy is the leadership of the organisation, elected members, our customers and our staff.

Digital transformation, challenges and improves how things are done today. Carmarthenshire County Council will continue to embrace change, and this will be achieved with greater use of digital technology and social media channels, building upon the significant progress made in these areas over the past 4 years.

We recognise that schools have extraordinary ICT needs, and to provide greater focus, a revised Digital Schools Strategy will be developed and aligned to Welsh Governments Digital Competence Framework, Education Digital Standards and the new HWB Grant. This will reflect the new ways working identified through the pandemic and the need to enhance the blended learning model in education.

The Digital Technology Strategy recognises that flexible, agile and integrated technology can only be delivered to the Council and its residents if we adopt the same leading-edge models of some of the most forward thinking and efficient companies across the globe.

COVID-19 Impact

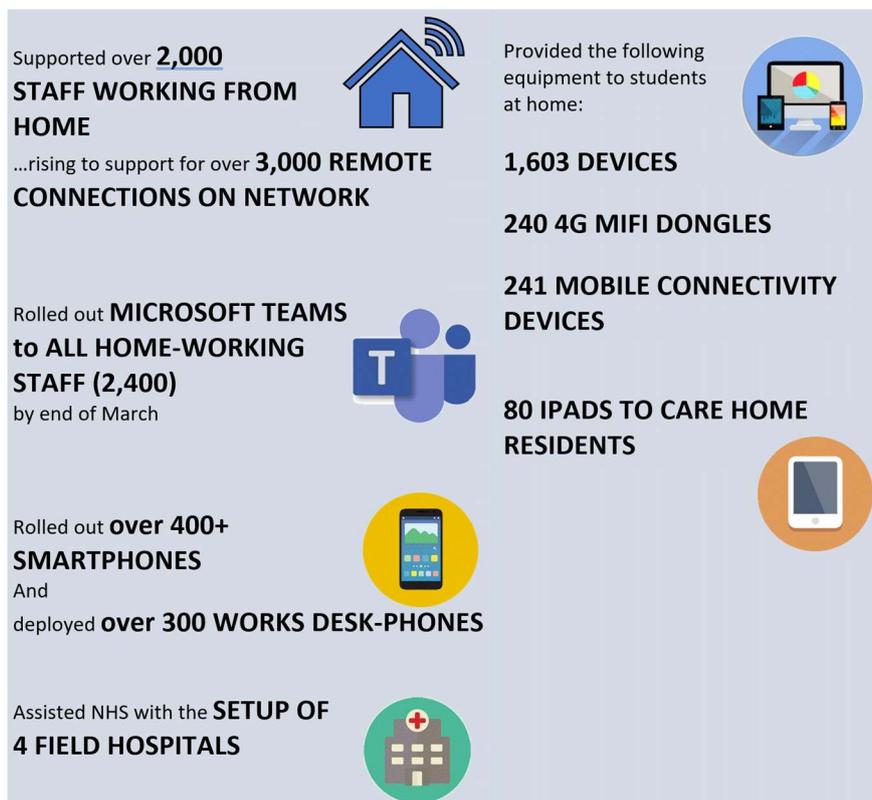
A COVID Impact Report was produced in December 2020 outlining how key projects and priorities implemented during our 1st Digital Transformation Strategy 2017-2020 over the past 4 years had put the authority in a strong position to respond to the wide technical and transformational challenges presented across the council.

Although we could not foresee some of the demands required by the pandemic, we were in a very good position to respond; which staff demonstrated great creativity and commitment in developing and implementing digital solutions to help with the ongoing delivery of critical services and aiding in the recovery plans of many service areas that had stopped and needed innovative solutions and information technology needs to help them recover - key projects outlined within this report.

For our **Residents and Businesses**, we had to take advantage of new digital platforms to allow them to quickly find information online or interact and engage with the local authority in ways and times that were convenient to them. This vision and investment put us in a favourable position at the onset to move services on-line and also facilitate home working for our staff.

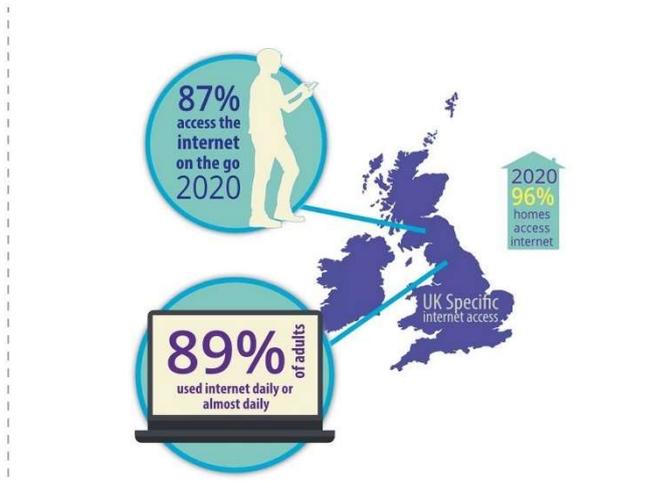
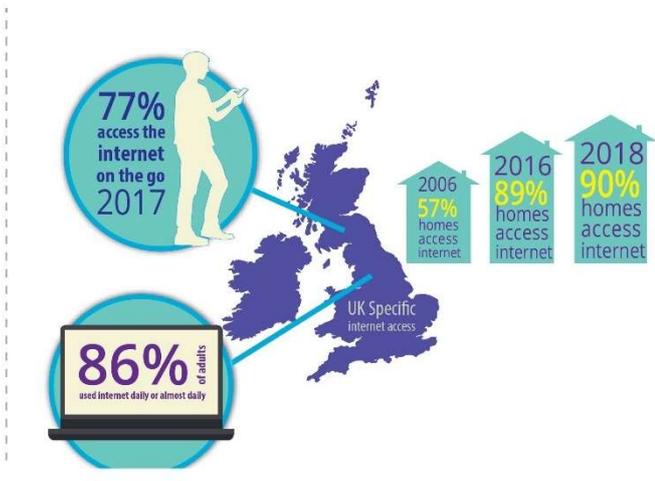
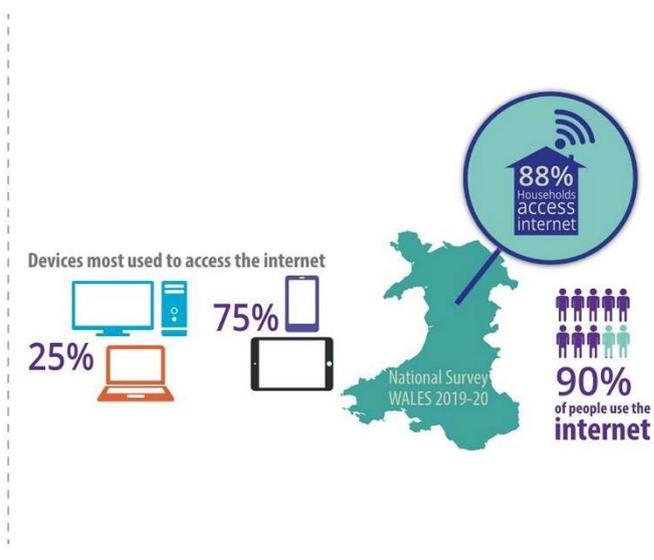
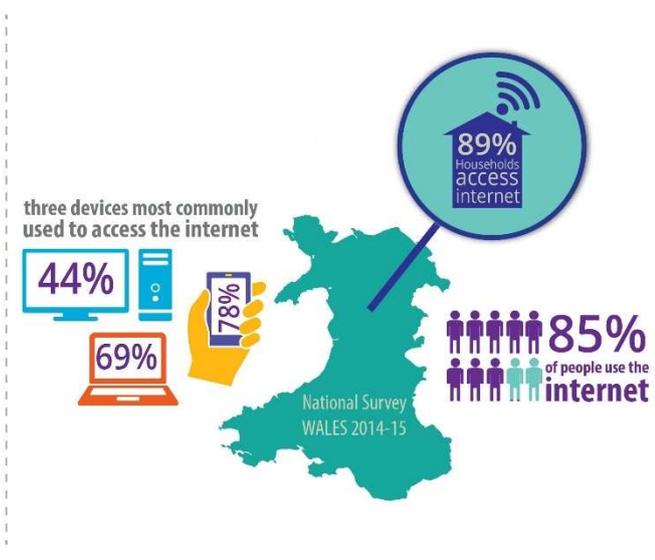
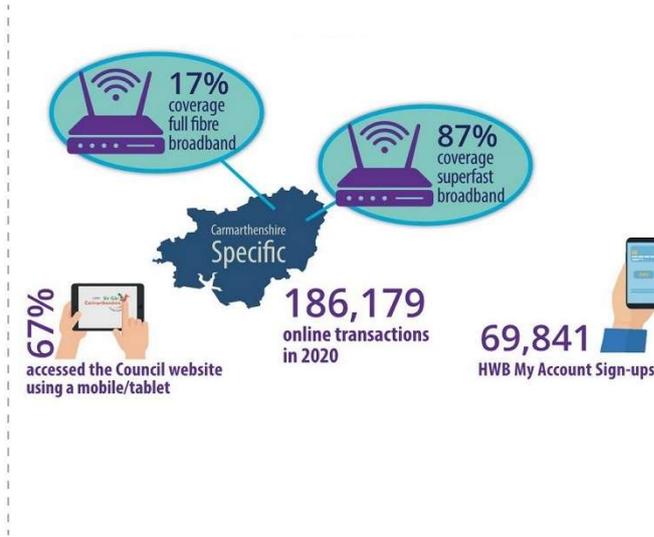
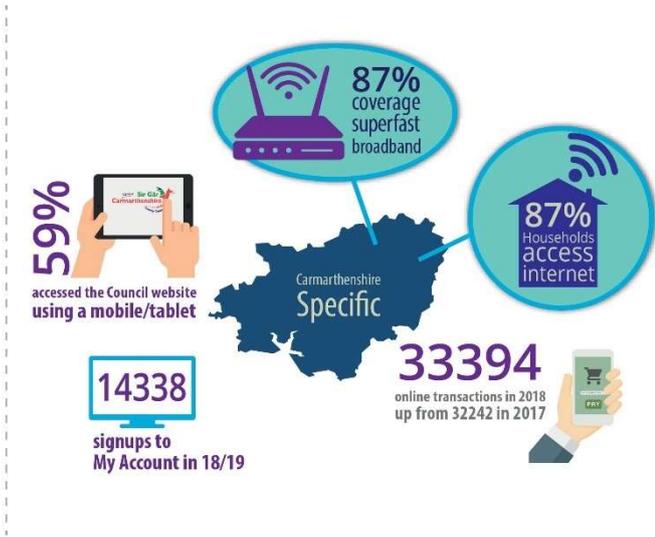
Our work on empowering our **Workforce** to be as efficient and effective as possible in the right place, at the right time based on the needs of citizen service delivery paid us dividends in the pandemic. The use of technology, and especially the use of Microsoft Teams, has been a vital component of the Council's response to the pandemic, and is helping to support the adoption of a far more dynamic and productive way of working. It has facilitated improved communication and team working at a local, regional, and national levels.

There has now been a significant shift to digital learning solutions which has supported the upskilling of staff across the organisation, and this has been vital in ensuring continuity of staffing resource to our critical services and facilitated the effective implementation of online service delivery options.



2018

2020



Resources

Throughout 2019/20 and 2020/21 we have invested a significant amount of financial and staffing resources ensuring the Authority continues its journey of transformation to a truly digital organisation. We have made significant investments in our people and skills, digital systems and services; providing a robust and resilient infrastructure to underpin citizen service delivery across the County. In addition to ICT Services ongoing revenue budget, we have invested the following over the past 2 financial years:

Capital

- £488K on specific departmental Digital Transformation projects which were scored and prioritised based on efficiencies and better ways of working by the corporate Digital Transformation Steering Group (DTSG).
- £56K on mitigating evolving cyber threats to the organisation and ensuring essential compliance of all systems, services and infrastructure.
- £158K on Corporate Wi-Fi replacement and improvements.
- £32K on County wide core network enhancements, ensuring our workforce has ultrafast access to internal and internet based digital resources via the best possible networks.
- £83K on Voice and Telephony Infrastructure, future proofing our communications capabilities and supporting home working.
- £150K invested on strategic digital initiatives to help services transition to Cloud services.
- £407K in improving data centre and the organisations digital Disaster Recovery capabilities.

People & Skills

We have invested £74K in retaining and upskilling ICT staff, providing them with the skills and ability to take our ambitious adoption of Digital Transformation and Technology forward. In addition, we have taken advantage of fully funded local, regional, and national development opportunities offered through Academi Wales, the Institute of Leadership and Management and our own internal Learning and Development department. Doing so in helping to develop and retain the Digital Leaders and Workforce of the future within Carmarthenshire.

Efficiencies

- £50k from savings delivered through the migration of Carmarthenshire Schools to the all-Wales HWB Digital learning platform.
- £79K Worth of efficiencies for Schools via renegotiated Printing and Telecommunications contracts.
- Renegotiating of our corporate Konica contract and 25% reduction of our printer estates; savings of £29k per annum.



"Enabling citizens to get the services and information they need online".



What it means?

- Providing high-quality user-friendly services and information online to residents.
- Providing increased 24/7 digital access to services that are bilingual and customer friendly.
- To provide a personal digital service and respond to customer needs.

Why is it Important?

- To meet customer demands and respond to rising customer expectations.
- To improve customer engagement with access to personalized information and services.
- With greater use of mobile technology, provision access to online services at the customers convenience, 'anytime, anywhere'.

Progress Made

Several projects that were identified and within the authorities Digital Transformation Strategy were fast tracked to assist front line service delivery during the Covid19 pandemic.

HWRC Online Appointments. To allow the re-opening of our 4 key Recycling Centres / Sites, the means for residents to make appointments quickly and conveniently. This online appointment system has ensured that members of the public could be allocated a slot and for the social distancing measures to be adhered to within the various HWRC sites across the Authority. Over 3000 appointments made within the first 24 hours at launch May 2020 and over 170,000 online bookings to date. This service contributed to a significant increase in our online HWB My Account sign-ups from 29,000 (2019 data) to now over 72,000 registered accounts by 2021.

ACTIF ANYWHERE. Members of our Actif Leisure Centres can access online classes through our new app by using their phone or tablet, laptop or smart TV. Particularly important to maintain the valuable service provided for exercise referrals and rehabilitation from home and to ensure continued positive impact upon health outcomes.



Libraries Online 'Click & Collect' Service. The means for customers to reserve their desired literature via the online system and arrange a convenient collection date / time at their chosen library. Equality of access is delivered through the twin provision of online as well as telephone ordering.

Free School Meals Direct Payments Requests. An online form was quickly needed with back-office workflow to accept and ensure accurate details and evidence was captured from families in receipt of Free School Meals for direct payments. This form and process was also integrated with our internal financial management system allowing payments to be made to those families in need of financial support.

Pembrey Country Park Online Bookings and Payments. A Booking System procured and implemented to allow the park to re-start their services in a safe and controlled way and to minimise cash handling at the park. Online bookings can now be taken via the Pembrey County Park Website for all outdoor activities being held at Pembrey Country Park (ski hire and tuition, bike hire, mini-golf, toboggan rides etc.). To ensure social distancing rules and reducing queues at car park 'pay' machines, we also developed in-house a 1- and 7-Day Online Pass/Payment which has full integration into the ANPR - Number Plate Recognition Car Barrier System.



"Carmarthenshire will aim to support its staff in adopting working practices with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints in order to optimise their performance in the delivery of quality and cost effective services".



What it means?

- A digital workforce is responsive and flexible
- Being responsive to the needs of our citizens by providing good public services and being flexible about where work is carried out.
- Flexibility for our staff is being able to work from different locations, at different times and use the most effective technology.

- It allows us to improve processes, procedures and work flows, eliminating waste and exploiting efficiencies through good use of data and analytics.

Progress Made

Several projects that were identified and within the authorities Digital Transformation Strategy were fast tracked to assist front line service delivery during the Covid19 pandemic.

Why is it Important?

- Agility and mobility brings efficiencies and increased productivity through better ways of working.
- It increases our ability to ensure a healthy and mutually beneficial work life balance for our workforce. This increases our ability to attract the necessary skills and knowledge for our workforce.

3000 Remote / Home Workers. The critical need to ensure we had a digital infrastructure and capability to cope with over 2000 members of staff working from home. To facilitate this we had to quickly install and configure additional Firewalls to handle the huge demands presented from overnight home working during the 1st lock-down and throughout 2020 and beyond. This work was completed before the end of March 2020 and we can now safely support over 3000 remote connections to our network.

Roll-out of Microsoft Teams for 2500 Staff.

We successfully rolled-out of Microsoft Teams Corporately by the end of March 2020. This ensured that all staff working from home (nearly 2500 staff) could communicate and collaborate with each other and meetings could progress efficiently. Channels and within Microsoft Teams proved an excellent way to share meeting notes, reports and have direct conversations with colleagues and partners organisations.

In-House Contract Tracing Database for Schools.

Development of an in-house Contact Tracing Database and System; to allow the TTP (Track, Trace, Protect) team the capabilities to monitor school covid-19 symptoms activity and assist the Central / Welsh Government Track and Trace Process, TTP CRM System and Mobile App.

Konica Contract Renewal and Printer Rationalisation.

Renegotiating of our corporate Konica contract and 25% reduction of our printer estates; savings of £29k per annum.

Domiciliary-Care Mobilisation to over 400 workers.

Procurement and roll-out of over 400+ Smartphones by the end of April 2020 and deployed to domiciliary care and social care staff that allowed them to work in a more agile and efficient manner without the need to visit Council buildings to collect work rotas and communicate easily with customers, managers, colleagues and back-office administration.

Over 1000 Devices for Vulnerable School Pupils.

Configuration and delivery of over 1000+ devices for vulnerable school pupils to enable them to work from home.

Over 300 Desk Phones for Staff to Work from Home.

We quickly deployed over 300+ of our works desk phones that were equipped with additional technology for key staff who needed to take calls from members of the public. This included the Authorities Contact Centre staff and Delta Wellbeing to work from home. Work is currently ongoing to upgrade our telephony infrastructure so that we can deploy smartphones for all staff across the Authority (if required). This means that staff will be able to receive traditional direct dial calls from members of the public to their laptops. This will remove the need for desk phones and will facilitate greater remote working.

BYOD (Bring Your Own Device).

Delivered the capability to allow staff the means to access their work email from their personal devices in a safe and secure manner. Facilitates greater remote working and flexibility for staff. This capability also enables engagement with non office-based staff to have access to systems and the intranet.

Agile Working.

Our Agile Working programme over the past 4 years has seen a significant shift to over 80% laptops and 20% desktops for our workforce. An agile workforce must be able to work from the most appropriate location at the most appropriate time. The implementation and installation of Microsoft Teams and the move to paperless meetings were all part of the Agile Working programme but the pandemic proved crucial preparedness and re-affirmed our decision to move towards an Agile Workforce.

The Council has operated a **Redeployment Hub**

run centrally by Human Resources which has matched volunteers, many from closed services. This approach has cut through the historic boundaries of different departments or constraints imposed by rigid job descriptions as Job Evaluation criteria.

A **Staff Hub Database** was developed within the

1st two weeks to add flexibility and effectiveness to the process together with clear Dashboards to present the information to senior managers.



"Enable residents and businesses in the County to use digital technology to enhance their lives".



What it means?

- Ensure that residents and businesses exploit the latest technology to improve their lives.
- Developing the digital skills of our residents from children to our elderly.
- High speed connectivity for every business so that they can compete in a global economy.
- Enable business to make use of 'cloud computing'. Cloud computing can accelerate time to value, drive higher adoption of new technologies, and connect the services offered in real time.
- Digitally transform Council business operations to make them more efficient.
- Ensure that our children live in digitally connected communities and have the latest digital technologies available to give them the best start I life.
- Every resident of Carmarthenshire should have the ability to access 'on-line' services which can be used to improve their 'quality of life'.

Progress Made

iPads for Care Home Residents. Service specific initiatives, such as the issuing of smart phones to Social work teams has also boosted productivity. 80 iPads to care home residents to keep in touch with their loved ones.

Why is it Important?

- A digital Carmarthenshire will encourage new business to invest in Carmarthenshire to support the local economy and attract sustainable employment.



*"Well done, distributing iPads to care homes in Carmarthenshire. I applaud you."
Compliment received*

Virtual Democracy. We ensured all Members had the capabilities and could attend virtual Council Meetings. The implementation of Zoom and Microsoft Teams, remote translations services, web streaming and the move to paperless meetings ensure democracy could continue as efficiently and effectively as possible. ICT Service played a key role in hosting and the Webcasting of Democratic meetings from June 2020 onwards. Prior to COVID-19 democratic meetings were webcasted by an external company called Public-I but they did not have a solution in place to allow a Virtual democratic meeting to be webcasted. Microsoft Teams was used to host the virtual meeting whilst staff from ICT Services setup and facilitated the webcasting of the meeting via Vimeo and the Authorities website. A work around solution was put in place with colleagues from the Translation team to facilitate simultaneous translation which was simplified with the use of ZOOM for democratic meetings.

Connectivity for Rural Workers and Members. There is a need to ensure staff have sufficient connectivity and sufficient broadband speeds in order to work efficiently but data from the Open Market Review 2019 claims that there are **12,838 premises in Carmarthenshire with speeds under 30mbps**. We have supported throughout the pandemic rural key workers and councillors who had experienced digital connectivity difficulties through deploying 4G routers via a Welsh Government pilot scheme.

Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme. Residents and businesses in rural areas of Carmarthenshire now have access to more funding for better broadband. Welsh Government has topped up the value of the Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme to those with less than 30Mbps. The vouchers have doubled in value and those eligible can now claim £7k for a small to medium sized business and £3,000 for residential premises. We have supported rural communities where possible to increase digital connectivity through actively promoting the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme, and encouraged residents to register their interest for broadband upgrade.

Application for Business Hardship Rent Relief. An online form was quickly needed with back-office workflow to accept applications or Business Hardship Rent Relief. This was developed and promoted via the council's website to allow business to quickly apply for this Welsh Government rent relief.



"Innovative digital solutions will enable increased collaboration and facilitate organisations to work seamlessly together".



What it means?

- Improved information sharing with other organisations and partners.
- Increased sharing of software and hardware platforms across the region.
- Is a catalyst for cultural cohesion enabling departments to focus on putting the citizen at the heart of what they do.

Progress Made

Why is it Important?

- Digital Collaboration underpins 'Digital Customer Service', the 'Digital Workforce' and 'Digital Communities and Business'.
 - Helps foster cohesion in teams. This is especially relevant to teams that are dispersed as cohesive teams are far more productive.
 - Creates an atmosphere of openness as staff are up to date with and able to access the very latest news and information.
 - Simplifies the way that we share data with other organisations and partners making everyone feel like part of a single team working on common objectives.
- Set-up of 4 Field Hospitals.** The critical need to assist the NHS with ICT Support for the rapid setup of 4 field hospitals across the County. Our role focused on the Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity needs within these temporary field hospitals.
- Flying Start - Digital App.** Flying Start Carmarthenshire became the first Flying Start in Wales to use a mobile app to help keep in touch with families. The team developed the app as a way to increase engagement, and to signpost families to important information and promote events in the local areas.

Digital Equality Agenda. This has been a challenge for officers and for schools. The provision of IT equipment and internet access to vulnerable learners or those children who live in areas with poor broadband coverage became a much more complex task than had first been imagined and led to delays in many children receiving equipment and some confusion between schools, parents and LA officers over how the process should be managed.

Although it is estimated that around 98% of all children now have access to digital resources at home that will be available for them in any further period of closure, there is a feeling that any future work on the digital equity agenda should be managed centrally by Local Authority Officers who are able to have an oversight of the whole system and control over the use and distribution of devices. This would remove some of the inconsistencies in the operation of this strategy which arose between distribution hubs in different school catchments.

The following equipment has been provided to support:

- **1,603 devices** to students at home, including laptops and Chromebooks.
- **240 4G MiFi dongles** were supplied to support families with remote learning across Carmarthenshire.
- **241 mobile connectivity devices** to students at home.

** further details on education and schools are detailed within the School Technology Strategy.*

Electronic Signatures (eSignatures). Prior to lockdown, both treasury management and grants processes were heavily paper based requiring either mailing or hand delivery of documents for signature to directors and heads of service. Working remotely, the Council has put in place electronic authorisation instead, and quickly implemented secure submission processes for grant returns to WG which have subsequently been advised as best practice by the Welsh Government grants centre of excellence. This has huge potential for streamlining back-office processes, printing/postage costs and faster service delivery by implementing electronic signature solutions across the wide range of council services that can exploit this technology, including extending with externals and partner organisations and 3rd parties.

Resilient Data & Voice Networks

What it means?

- Our local and wide area networks, internet feeds, telephony and unified communications systems underpin communication across the organisation and with partners.
- Our already significant and sophisticated network provides the ability to communicate, collaborate and share data, systems and services.

Why is it Important?

- Data and voice network connectivity and internet access are critical in delivering 21st century citizen services.
- The demand on our bandwidth and internet connectivity channels from corporate services, schools and partners has grown rapidly. We fully expect this demand to increase in the coming years.
- Our network is the foundation of everything we do in terms of technology. Without it departmental, schools and partner systems and services simply would not function.
- We already have both central and departmental systems and services in the Cloud. Our network is the vehicle that allows us to access those, now and in the future.

Progress Made

- Core Network Switch/Router replacement - Three core sites have had their legacy equipment replaced and upgraded, enhancing, and expanding our network capabilities. There are two core sites remaining.
- Data Centre core Switch/Router replacement - New hardware has been configured and installed which has significantly enhanced our Data Centre resilience.
- PSBA Network Transformational re-design - Twelve corporate sites running at sub 10MB have been upgraded this year to 100MB fibre or Superfast connectivity. We have also commissioned Ty Parcyrhun as a new core site.
- LIDW 2 - Forty-one schools have had their PSBA connectivity upgraded to 100Mbps fibre this year.
- Telephony Virtualisation - Mitel telephone system virtualization is complete, delivering significant revenue savings and resilience into our telephony services.
- Increased deployment of Corporate Wi-Fi connectivity - Deployment of additional Wi-Fi access points into the largest ten buildings across the county has been completed. This has provided blanket Wi-Fi coverage for staff and visitors at core sites.
- Additional, resilient PSBA internet feeds - With the commissioning of the Ty Parcyrhun site as a core network location, an additional Internet connection has been commissioned to provide increased internet capacity and additional resiliency to the organisation.



Secure & Resilient Data Centers

What it means?

- Ensuring our data, systems and services are hosted in the most efficient and appropriate location.
- Ensuring our data, systems and services are built and managed on the most efficient and appropriate platforms.

Why is it Important?

- Data Centres are the core of our business, housing our infrastructure, data, and applications. Without them, ICT simply would not function.
- The contents of our data centres are of extremely high organisational value in terms of physical assets, data, annual spend, organisational performance and service delivery.

Progress Made

- Expansion and evolution of Cyber Security Capabilities - Procurement and deployment of our new Anti-Virus solution is complete, providing a more resilient and secure digital environment as well as improved response capabilities to a Cyber breach.

- Replacement and upgrade of our Storage Area Network - is complete, providing the authority with improved performance and capacity of systems and data and a sustainable data storage environment.
- Replacement and upgrade of our UNIX server environment - is complete, improving performance and resilience of several business-critical systems and services.
- Replacement and upgrade of our Disaster Recovery capabilities - Strategic review of existing DR capabilities has been complete with a number of tests and procedural changes implemented.
- Windows Server 2012/16 migration and adoption - Work is underway and ongoing, ensuring the authority retains a secure and compliant server environment with increased management and performance. To date 174 servers have been upgraded to Windows Server 2012/16 and 128 remain