

# Digital by Default

## Local Government and Digital by Default

- [The Transaction Explorer](#) for Gov.uk estimates local government transactions as being 572 million per year across the country. This is the second highest for government (the first being HM Revenue & Customs at 978 million transactions).
- The Department for Communities and Local Government is the only central government department currently without a published digital strategy.
- The *Better Connected 2013* Society of IT Management (SocITM) survey of council website performance concluded that, “with notable exceptions, local government organisations are not yet signed up to the 'digital by default' agenda set by the Government.”<sup>1</sup>
- Surrey’s own website saw a drop in its rating from 4 stars (the maximum possible) in 2012 to 2 stars in 2013. The website was assessed on whether “website design and navigation enables quick and simple customer journeys for website users from search engine or home page through to resolution.”<sup>2</sup>
- Comparable councils that scored highly in the survey included [East Sussex](#), [Kent](#), [West Sussex](#) and [Hampshire](#).
- In its summary of the general survey findings, SocITM commented that “failure to improve websites, or even maintain existing standards, will undermine the potential to deliver savings and efficiencies associated with channel shift, and to meet customers' growing expectations of what service delivery online should be like.”<sup>3</sup>
- SocITM has prepared a strategy document titled [Planting the Flag: a strategy for ICT-enabled local public services reform](#). It sets out three core principles for reform, six strategic capabilities that need to be in place in order to achieve reform, and six key issues for consideration. These are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> SocITM ‘[Local government not signed up to 'digital by default' agenda suggest results from latest Better connected survey of council website performance](#)’ 1 March 2013 (accessed 21 August 2013)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### Core Principles:

- **Collaborate, share and re-use assets** across public service organisations.
- **Redesign services to simplify, standardise and automate** holistically taking people, processes, information and technology into account when designing services.
- **Innovate to empower citizens and communities** shifting ownership and use of information and technology towards the service user.

### Strategic capabilities

- **Leadership** “Politicians, managers, staff and citizens will need to be engaged and energised to address the problem of fragmented services and the legacy of paternalistic approaches.”
- **Governance** “proper accountability and separation of policy, implementation and audit will be essential.”
- **Organisational change**
- **Strategic commissioning and supplier management**
- **Shared services** “senior professionals managing and running ICT infrastructure and support desks, and technical specialists should be shared”
- **Professionalism** “technical and digital professionals should be accessing the same sort of accreditation schemes as legal and finance professionals do, so that organisations can be confident their skills and capabilities are fit for purpose now and in the future.”

### Key issues

- **Information governance** – How the information is controlled.
  - **Information management, assurance and transparency** – How the information is organised and shared.
  - **Digital access and inclusion** – How users and staff access and use the information.
  - **Local public services infrastructure** – How the technical structure supports public services.
  - **Business change** – How public services change in order to address people, process, information and technology, as well as overcoming organisational boundaries.
  - **ICT policies of central government departments** – How central government ICT policy, decision-making and practice impacts on local public services.
- A more detailed executive summary of the above is attached.