Our new Innovation Strategy - Introduction

> *"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that have not been invented, in order to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet."*
>
> *Karl Fisch 2006*

We are in the throes of a digital revolution, which is already having a pervasive impact on a global scale. Here in Guildford it is important that we recognise and plan for the huge advantages that the new technologies can bring. The speed of change is such that nobody can accurately predict what the future holds over the next 15 to 20 years. We can only be certain that there will be massive and disruptive transformation. Transportation, housing, energy, health and social care - and the way in which we deliver our public services - are just some of the areas that will be affected.

This Innovation Strategy establishes a Vision for Guildford that embraces a digital future and promotes our town as being at the leading edge of Innovation. Our aim is to enable technological change and innovation to support local economic competitiveness, quality of life and public service delivery with a view to creating a vibrant, prosperous, resilient and sustainable borough for the digital age. Our strategy will promote the development of high-quality infrastructures to support new technologies and systems. We will also raise awareness of how social and technological changes are influencing current and future planning and investment decisions, including the evolution of how we live and work.

Guildford Borough Council is only one of many organisations that will influence the development of our borough and much of its work will involve collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The University of Surrey is at the forefront of academic research into many areas of innovation; the Royal Surrey County Hospital is also pioneering research; and Guildford and its surrounding areas host many ground-breaking companies that are leading the way in new digital technologies. The Council has established excellent links in recent years within the academic, research and business communities. We will continue to align our activities to promote cooperation and build on our local strengths.

Our strategy includes delivery of the **following three Objectives** that expand the strategic priorities set out under the Innovation theme of the Council's Corporate Plan:

1. Facilitating smart places infrastructure across Guildford:

We will seek to promote optimised methods of construction, operation and maintenance as we develop our infrastructure using leading edge technology and new approaches to find efficiencies, co-ordinate activities, and to collect and share data to do more with less. We will identify areas where new developments, methods or materials will have a positive impact and plan accordingly. Our aim is to ensure where practicable that the potential for future disruptive changes are taken into account in current planning policies and developments and that digital infrastructure is built into regeneration and new builds.   A key part of our approach will be to encourage open source platforms and facilitate open data where possible.

2. Guildford as the Innovators' location of choice:

We will promote Guildford as the welcoming location of choice for companies, researchers and developers, who lead the digital revolution, with the Council providing active support for innovation and technological change in order to develop a connected community. This will include developing awareness and encouragement of opportunities for funding and promoting the development of complementary businesses with a particular emphasis on emerging and disruptive technologies.

3. Future Guildford - working to improve value for money and efficiency in Council services:

We will develop the Future Guildford programme aimed at reorganising our whole Council for the benefit of our residents. We plan to be an exemplar Council with a reputation as an early adopter, embracing modern new ways of working, new materials and new thinking, where cost efficient, beneficial and feasible to do so. We will invest in our IT infrastructure, increasing customer self-service and we will focus on commissioning and commercial opportunities. Our aim is to address issues of duplication and to redesign services to improve delivery and be more efficient. Where appropriate we will adopt innovative approaches with a view to future proofing the organisation.

The Innovation Strategy is described on the following pages and in the detailed action plan. Reflecting the dynamic nature of innovation and its ability to transform our daily lives, our working environments and our natural and built landscapes, this Strategy will need to be organic,

> ### What do we mean by Innovation?
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> **Innovation is about . . .**
>
> - **Inventing something**
> - **Improving an existing product or service**
> - **Doing something in a different way**
> - **Enabling changes to the way we live and work . . .**

with regular policy reviews and updates. This will be best achieved in dialogue with our stakeholders – for example, members of the public, local businesses, our staff and partners in public sector organisations – whose contributions will help the Council to realise its Vision for Guildford through an adaptable, innovative, sustainable and vibrant economy.

Councillor Gordon Jackson

Lead Member – Innovation and Transformation
Guildford Borough Council Executive

> *"What we do now and in the next few years will profoundly affect the next few thousand years."*
> *Sir David Attenborough, speaking at the World Economic Forum, 2019*