Digital progress in local government
Audit Methodology

ACCOUNTSCOMMISSION

Aim of the audit

The overall aim of the audit was to answer the question: What progress are councils making in becoming digital councils that improve services and deliver better outcomes for citizens?

As part of this we set out to answer the following questions:

- How well do councils understand what it means to be a digital council?

- How effectively are councils putting in place the building blocks to become a digital council?

- How well are councils progressing towards being digital councils and what are the barriers they are facing?

Methodological approach and rationale

The methodology used by the audit team to answer these questions included detailed case studies in a sample of six councils, interviews and document review with key national stakeholders, and wider literature review on digital in local government both in and beyond Scotland and the UK.

There are currently no common indicators or consistent data set that measures digital progress councils are making.

The case study methodology in a sample of councils combined with interviews at a national level and wider literature review, allowed us to:

- identify the key principles/characteristics of a digital council

- identify common barriers and challenges

- identify common approaches that are helping councils to progress

- identify illustrative examples

- focus on improvement while still providing some assurance on progress.

Methods	Selection Rationale	Application of method
Fieldwork at sample of six councils: • Interviews • Focus groups • Document review	The six fieldwork sites were selected to provide a mix of councils based on the following criteria: • Urban/rural – a mix of city, urban, urban-rural, rural and island authorities • Size and scale of councils • Levels of deprivation • Levels of digital maturity and digital leadership attributes • Other ongoing scrutiny work	The following six councils were selected: • Clackmannanshire • Eilean Siar • Fife • Glasgow City • North Lanarkshire • Perth and Kinross Interviews were carried out with key members of staff including: • chief executives and leadership team • Digital and ICT leads • finance leads and HR/OD leads • elected members. • Staff representatives Focus groups were also carried out with frontline staff and digital teams who had been involved in specific digital transformation programmes. A range of documents were reviewed including digital strategies and plans, corporate documents.
Interviews with key national stakeholders and document review	Stakeholder mapping was carried out to identify key stakeholders involved in the digital agenda in Scottish local government. Interviews with national stakeholders allowed us to triangulate the findings at the sample councils to identify common issues and progress across the sector, as well as identifying the role of national stakeholders.	The following national stakeholders were interviewed: • Local Government Digital Partnership • The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government • Improvement Service • COSLA • Scotland Excel • SCVO • Scottish Government Documents reviewed included: • Digital Office Business Plan • Progress reports to SOLACE • Digital Office work programme documents
Literature review on digital in local government both within Scotland and beyond Scotland and the UK	A literature review was undertaken to help identify the key principles and characteristics of a digital council.	Literature review: • Research/ policy papers on digital • RUK and international case studies