
OUR VISION FOR A DIGITAL COUNCIL

CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

2019 - 2022



INTRODUCTION

Our vision is to provide **‘high quality and easy to use services that are designed with the customer in mind’** and in this Customer Access Strategy we detail how we are achieving this. It explains how we are transforming the services we provide to the residents of South Holland and how we are making best use of digital technology to simplify the way residents engage with us. We want our customers to have the best possible experience when they use our services and to be able to do so 24 / 7 on any device they choose.

In achieving this there is no compromise in our commitment to understanding our customers and their needs. We aim to increase our customers’ control over their experience with us whilst utilising digital channels as a way of delivering services in the most efficient way. We ask those customers who are able to self-serve through the My Account function to do so, whilst we provide support to help those who are less confident in doing this or do not have access to technology, reserving our most personal methods of support for the most vulnerable.

At a time when expectation and demand is increasing and the resources we have available for us to meet these are reducing we must find new delivery methods that meet both the demands and efficiencies required of us.

We will listen to our customers about their experiences with us and use their feedback to make real differences to our services. We want our services to be valued by those who use them. Customers should experience seamless services where they are able to access everything they need from us and our partners in one place. We are committed to providing services that are:

- Built around our customers’ needs
- Consistent and simple
- Easy to use
- Flexible
- Cost effective

Our service delivery must be focused on simplifying the way customers access our services, understanding their journey with us, giving them control over the services they use, listening to and responding to their feedback. Services which can be delivered digitally will be, allowing expensive resources to be focused on those services which cannot be delivered digitally and focus on our most vulnerable customers.



Cllr Tracey Carter
 Executive Member
 Governance & Customer



Maxine O'Mahony
 Executive Director
 Strategy & Governance

OUR VISION

To provide high quality and **easy to use** services that are designed with our **customers** in mind, that are delivered efficiently with improved **value for money**.

To encourage customers to self-serve, wherever possible, so that we can focus our resources on the people who **need our help** the most.

To improve the **digital skills** and connectivity of our residents and the region.

- Improving customer experience through better digital services
- Adopting Government Digital Service (GDS) as our benchmark

Customer experience



- Giving our staff and elected members the right digital tools and training to work smarter

Productivity



- Minimising internal cost of services
- Using external providers where beneficial and cost effective

Savings



- Making it easier and more convenient to pay online
- Using digital marketing to promote our traded services

Revenue generation



The majority of residents in South Holland already access the Internet on a regular basis



87% of them have been online in the last 3 months



Have all of the basic digital skills required to use digital services

74% have access to 4G allowing easy access to online services



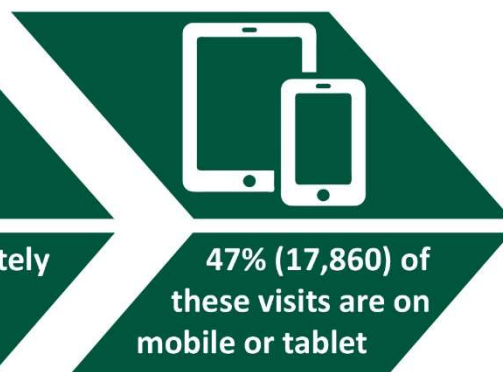
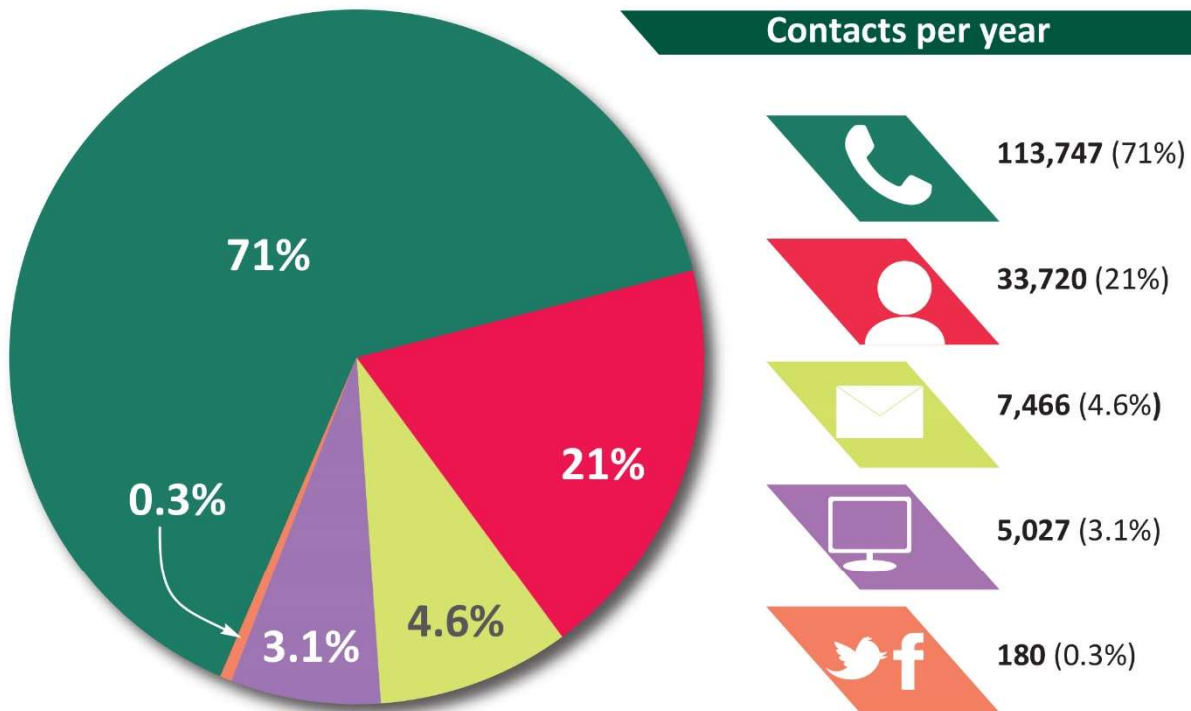
93% have access to broadband speeds of over 10 Megabits per second

There are approximately 90,000 residents in South Holland



The way our residents contact us is changing...

Over the last three years South Holland District Council has made a large proportion of services available online. Take up has been good, however there is still a disconnect in those that access the Internet regularly and those that use our digital services



Our ambition is to close that disconnect and to have more than 50% of customer contacts via digital means by 2022, significantly reducing telephone and face to face contact allowing us to spend more time with those people who are less likely to have direct online access.



OUR DIGITAL AMBITION

1. To always provide the best possible customer experience

We will simplify the ways customers can access our services and give them choice and control. They will be able to choose from multiple channels and be able to pay Council bills or charges 24/7 using easy payment methods.

2. To provide services that are built around our customers' needs

Our services will reflect our customers' needs. We will continue to expand our self-service option through simple user-friendly online forms linking to the **'My Account'** customer portal. From here, customers can access all the services they need from any device for a consistent customer experience that features less waste and is more productive.

3. To provide online services so good people choose to use them

Our ambition is to provide services that residents want to use – leaving more time for us to help those that need additional support.

4. To focus on those that need support - the digitally excluded

Our evolving digital services allow for greater choice and better access to our services and information. We recognise that not everyone has the skills or access to the necessary equipment to take advantage of this and that the rural nature of South Holland offers its own challenges. For this reason we are working with the community to increase customer access to the right technology while also helping to improve confidence of the digitally excluded, so they are better able to access online services. (See appendix 3 – South Holland Council's Digital Exclusion Strategy).

5. Continually look to improve what we do via customer feedback

We will continue to seek public opinion and feedback via our online feedback form and customer surveys. We will use this to help improve our services and products. When launching new services or ways of working, residents will be asked to assist with 'user testing' and we will actively seek feedback to allow positive iteration.

6. Protect customers' data

We will ensure that our customers' data is kept safe and will only be kept for as long as it's needed, in line with the latest General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

As ways of working and communicating change we will ensure nobody gets left behind.

The customer experience will be a positive one reflected by customers saying:

It's easy to find information about services I want to use, and the Council keeps me informed about changes and issues that matter to me

I can contact the Council any time I want and using any device I choose

I get a consistent online experience whichever of the Council's services I'm using

The Council's online services are easy to use, reliable and secure. I have my own account and I only have to log in once

I can access the internet for free in a helpful and safe way

I feel confident doing this, and can use my skills to do much more than contact the Council

I prefer to contact the Council online rather than any other way as it saves me time

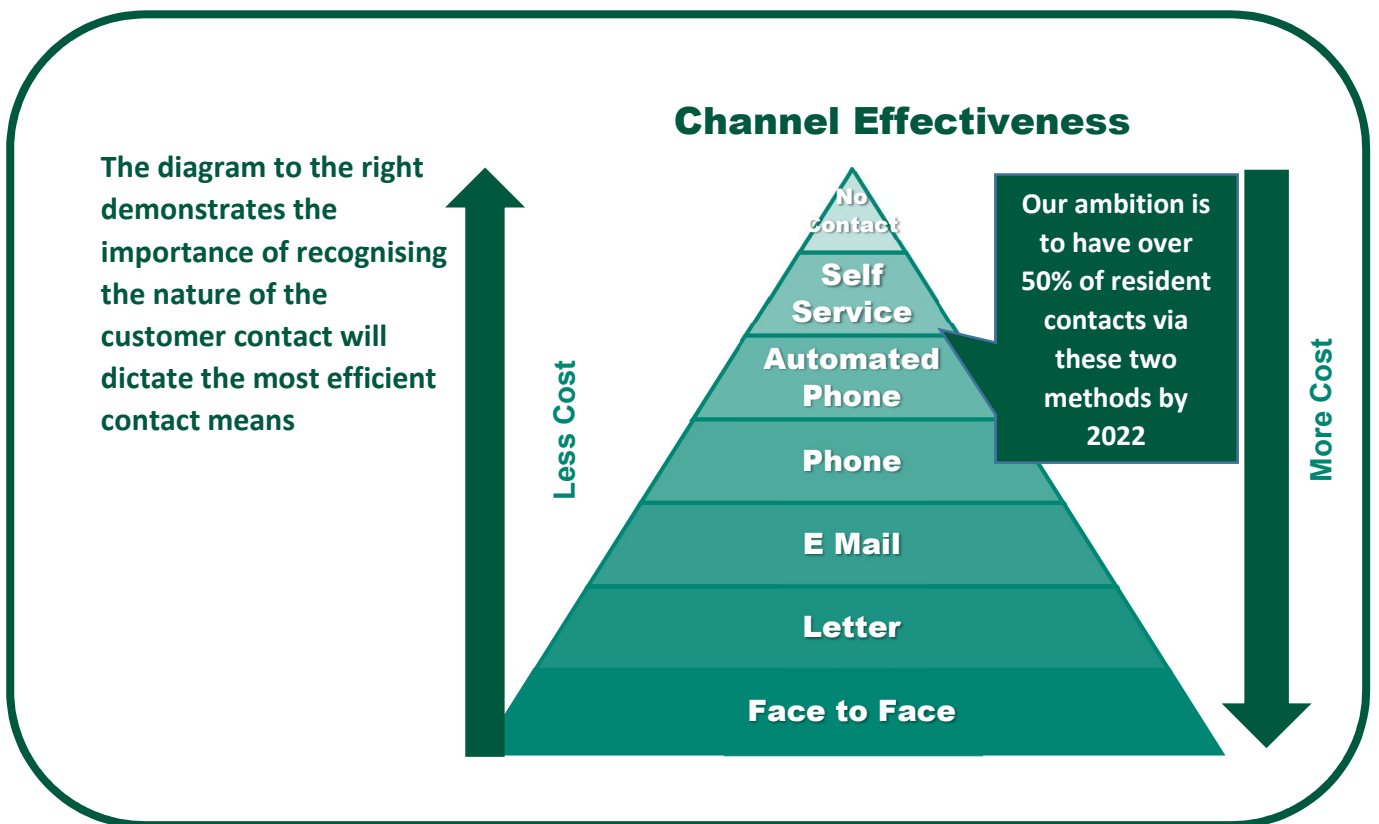
There's personalised support to help me go from an absolute beginner to expert user of the internet



Customer Access Channels Overview

South Holland District Council is committed to providing customers with a choice of access methods that best matches the customers' needs.

It recognises that online represents the most efficient means of contact and where possible this will be the preferred channel. It does however realise that in some cases alternative contact methods are more appropriate. It also notes that not all of its customers have access to online or may lack the confidence with using it, in these cases the council will ensure that other contact methods remain an option and are easy to use, however, it will do its best to assist customers to embrace digital.



Contact Strategy by Channel – in order of preference



Online

- Previous experience with garden waste bin sign-ups has shown that where digital processes are made simple and easy to use, over 80% of customers will self-serve online.
- Provide easy-to-use, joined-up processes to allow customers to engage with the Council 24/7.
- Give preference to online contact, wherever possible, while ensuring other channels are available to those that need them.
- Expand the **My Account** facility so registered users can access all Council communications and services in one place without the need to re-enter their details. We will continue to add new features that allow customers to view useful information, personalised to their postcode, such as 'planning applications near me'.
- Provide end-to-end, efficient customer journeys by reviewing and redesigning our processes and back-office systems.
- Continue the roll-out of online forms to help reduce the number of email contacts.
- Ensure our website is accessible and customers with disabilities are able to use it easily.
- Ensure web content is up-to-date and accurate.
- Encourage website feedback via the online feedback form, respond and act on this in line with our Customer Charter (see page 11).
- Help our customers to use online services when visiting our offices, with staff on hand to assist, and make sure our online services are promoted and supported by quick guides and online video training guides for those customers who need help.
- Enable staff to communicate with customers whilst out in the community via mobile electronic devices, improving our response times and reducing the need for follow-up contacts.



Social

- Embrace modern means of communications, integrating social media into our standard communication channels and giving it equal weight.
- Use Social Media to communicate quickly and openly with our customers.
- Gain customer feedback about the Council through social media, so issues being discussed in the community are understood and acted upon as quickly as possible.



Contact Us online form/Email

- Replace incoming email by expanding the use of electronic forms and processes. These are available 24/7 and integrate directly into Council systems.



By Telephone

- Have one contact number and reduce direct dialling allowing customers to be helped in a clear, simple and timely way whilst providing the best value for money
- Strive to resolve issues at the first point of contact, so fewer calls need to be passed through to services for a response
- Sensible use of automation to better direct customers to online services and a single point of resolution
- Answer the phone promptly but not at the expense of other channels (telephone contact will be given **equal importance**, but not preference over other contact methods)



In Person (Face-to-Face)

- Focus face-to-face on those who need it most, while making sure that it remains available to anyone who prefers to contact us in this way
- Help customers get online by using face-to-face as a stepping stone
- Help our customers to use online services when visiting our offices, or those of our partners such as the libraries
- Make sure our online services are promoted and supported by 'how to' guides and online video training guides for those customers who need help



Post

- Post is the least efficient and most time-consuming means of communicating with our customers so wherever possible, alternative communication channels will be adopted
- We commit to reducing printing and postage wherever we can, as this represents a significant cost to the Council and is damaging to the environment.
- Where customers do choose to write to the Council it will be responded to in a timely way, but using alternative cheaper channels where possible.

South Holland District Council's Customer Charter



Right treatment



You can trust us to:

- Do what we say we will do
- Be helpful, polite, and treat you fairly and with respect
- Do all we can to understand your circumstances
- Follow processes correctly
- Tell you what to do next if you're not satisfied with how you've been treated
- Protect your personal information

Get it right



We will:

- Deliver what we promise consistently
- Put things right when we get them wrong and apologise
- Explain things clearly
- Improve by listening to our customers

Keeping you informed



We will:

- Deal with your request the first time you contact us, or as soon as we can
- Tell you what will happen next and by when

Easy access



We will:

- Make more of our services available online for you to use at times that suit you
- Help you get online
- Explain clearly how to contact us in other ways

In return we expect our customers to:

- Respect our employees
- Help us save money by using online services where possible
- Recycle where you can
- Tell us what you think of our services in a constructive way

South Holland District Council will respond to your contact as quickly as possible but are committed to the following minimum standards*:

Channel	Acknowledgement	Stage 1	Stage 2
Online	Acknowledgment immediately	Up to 5 working days for full response	-
E mail	24hrs	Up to 5 working days for full response	-
Phone	Within 120 seconds	Up to 5 working days for full response	-
Face to Face	You will be seen within 15 minutes if you have pre-booked an appointment and you arrive on time	You will be seen within 30 minutes if you do not have an appointment	-
Letter / post	You will be responded to in 10 working days	-	-
Standard Formal Complaint	Acknowledged within 3 working days	Dealt with within 15 working days of receipt	Dealt with within 20 working days of receipt
Web Complaint	Acknowledgment immediately	Dealt with within 15 working days of receipt	Dealt with within 20 working days of receipt
Standard FOI	Acknowledged within 3 working days	Response within 20 working days	-
Web FOI	Acknowledged immediately	Response within 20 working days	-

*Please note: more complex enquiries or applications can take up to 21 days.

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Appendices

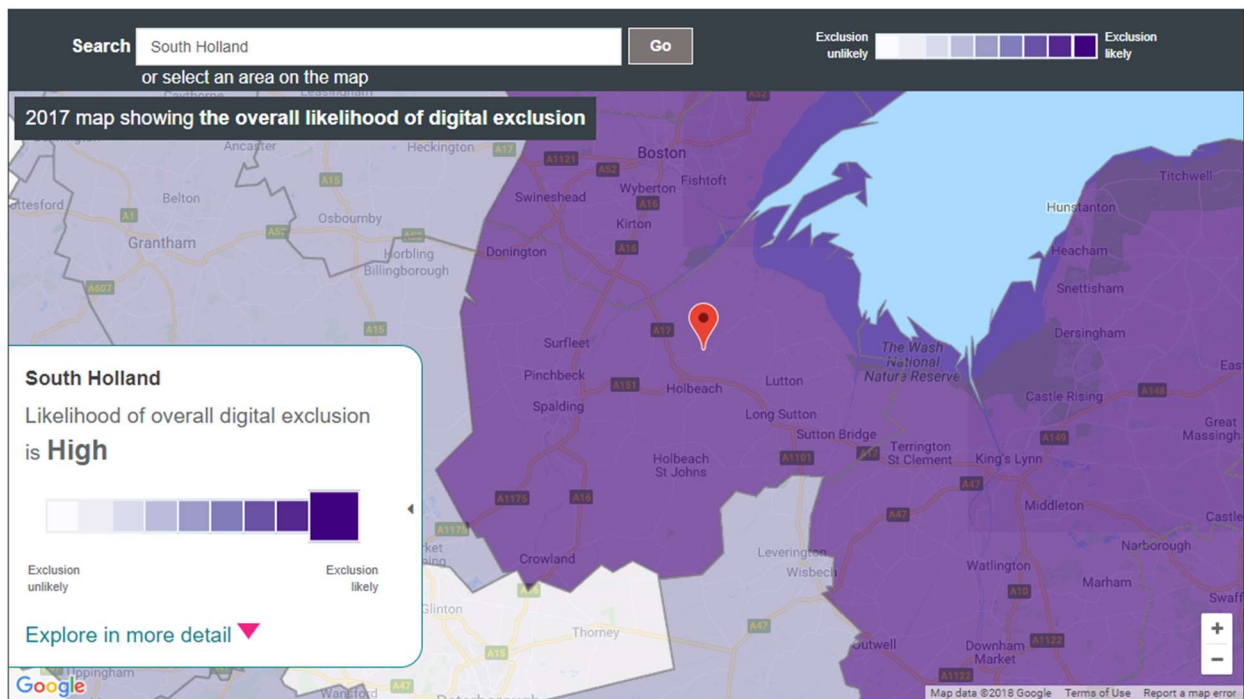
Appendix 1 - Our Digital Themes 2019 -2022

<p><u>Theme 1 Digital Place – The community perspective</u></p> <p>We will continue to engage with stakeholders, partners, suppliers and investors across the district, the county and beyond in the maintenance, development and design of our communications infrastructure. We will be supportive of applications by telecommunications companies which will result in improved digital connectivity in our area. We will also call on partners to ensure that the broadband needs of our region are met.</p> <p>Opportunity – a connected place which offers better Broadband availability and free internet access in key locations (eg: libraries and council offices) to reduce digital exclusion, building skills and confidence</p> <p>Opportunity – enabling collaboration</p> <p>Outcome – this theme will support the Council in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the lives of customers • Enabling a “smart place” • Providing income opportunities • Facilitating the delivery of community priorities 	<p><u>Theme 2 - Digital Customer - The customer perspective:</u></p> <p>Enabled by the digital services and information they need, online and via a ‘channel of choice’. Facilitating an “end to end” service delivery in a user-friendly way, similar to that seen in much of the private sector. This is in response to more and more digital customers that are internet savvy and mobile connected – ‘how does a digital service enable me?’</p> <p>For example: to consume digital services, communicate digitally, shape personal services effectively, available (24/7) with privacy respected.</p> <p>Opportunity – efficient customer journeys Improved efficient Customer journeys will enable residents and businesses to interact with the Council digitally for better and quicker outcomes</p> <p>Outcome – this theme will support the Council in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling customers to access end-to-end services
<p><u>Theme 3 Digital Council - The staff perspective</u></p> <p>The workforce will have sufficient training and skills to use the digital tools required; to deliver services effectively and efficiently – delivering positive outcomes for customers by giving our workforce access to the business data and solutions they need, enabled by the most appropriate available technology and ensuring they have the skills and proficiency to use them effectively. We will bring together all content onto a single digital platform - supporting channel shift to self-service for our workforce and reinforced through the provision of intuitive transactions, which will include the need for “access for all” - including non-networked employees.</p> <p>Opportunity – smarter working Smart working will create a 21st century workforce that is focused on delivering outcomes with bureaucracy minimised through automation</p> <p>Outcome – this theme will support the Council in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the Council's efficiency 	<p><u>Theme 4 Digital Foundation - A resilient and reliable Infrastructure</u></p> <p>A secure and robust digital and ICT foundation will enhance the efficiency and responsiveness of the Council's operations, supported by a highly skilled ICT workforce that will take advantage of the latest and emerging technologies and opportunities as they arise. We will take a whole Council approach when implementing our infrastructure, which will include core ‘Enterprise’ components such as: information, email, voice and data networks, hosting and client devices. We will pursue sustainable and environmentally responsible choices in procurement, pursuing green options and more efficient use of resources to reduce energy usage.</p> <p>The provision of such a level of capability requires a solid and dependable service that will be maintained and invested in on a regular basis, as necessary. It will also have ‘appropriate’ level of resilience, measured against risk and driven by updated policies; the service will be scalable, delivering capacity to reflect organisation demand and changes balancing the need in delivering ‘value for money’ for our customers.</p> <p>Opportunity - digitally capable The Council can build future capability to deliver technology services through a broader range of partnerships including suppliers and other public bodies, e.g. councils partnering with universities, operating digital and/or ICT apprenticeships</p> <p>Outcome – this theme will support the Council in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the Corporate Plan • Delivering the Council transformation • Delivering themes 1-3

Appendix 2 – Digital inclusion strategy

Risk of Digital Exclusion

- South Holland District Council recognises that despite the ever-increasing adaption of Digital there is still a risk of Digital Exclusion for a percentage of its residents
- The latest Digital Exclusion heat map below, developed by the Local Government Association, the LSE (London School of Economics) and Lloyds Banking Group, shows that the overall likelihood of digital exclusion in South Holland is HIGH, with 25% of its population not having the five basic digital skills. The heat map uses eight different digital and social metrics to calculate the overall likelihood of exclusion.

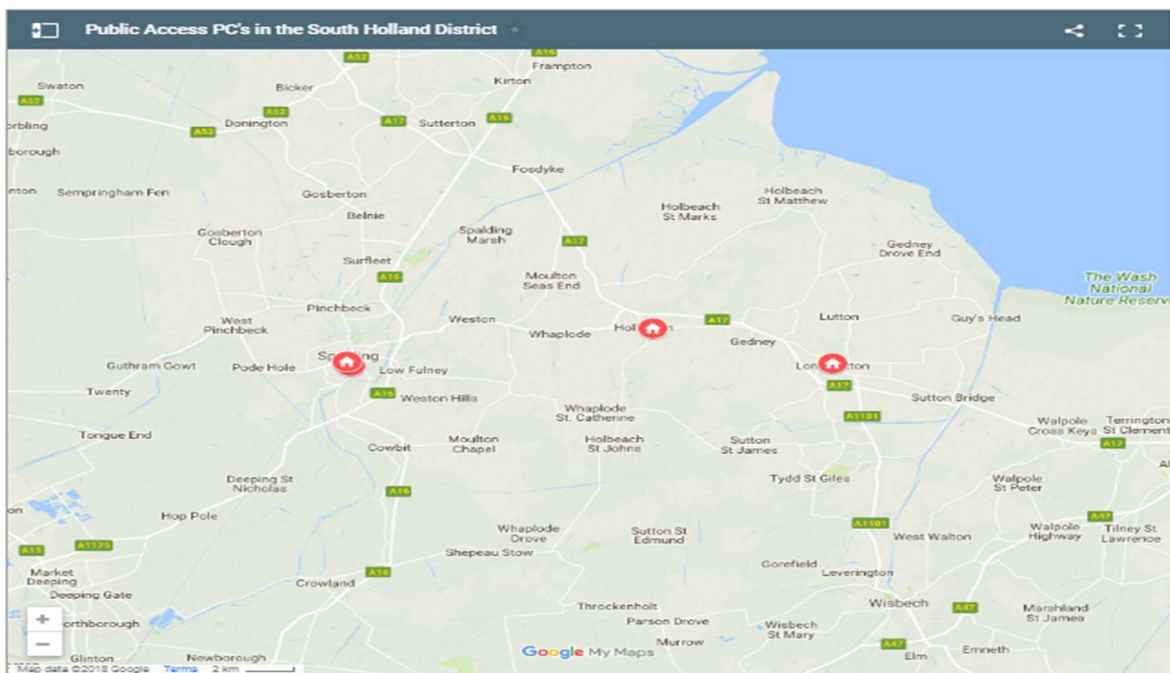


- Without action there is a danger that residents of South Holland will get left behind and not be able to perform simple digital tasks both locally and nationally. For example Universal Credit, which is being rolled out across the district requires applicants to have an email address and make all claims via online means
- Whilst avoiding stereotyping, the sections of the community most at risk are likely to be:
 - Job seekers, including those claiming Universal Credit
 - Low income families, including those with young children
 - Older people (socially isolated people)
 - People with disabilities

Resolution

- We are working with key partners such as Lincolnshire County Council, the Libraries and the Department of Work and Pensions to provide facilities where residents can access online services and receive help from trained staff on how to use this equipment
- The Council is committed to championing the need for better broadband across the district
- Either directly or through third parties such as Age Concern, we will help to provide and/or promote 'Silver Surfer' get online courses for older residents
- We will compile and promote Wi-Fi locations and details of free-to-use broadband and digital access across our district, supporting residents to access our services
- Our offices in Spalding are being turned into self-service hubs where residents will be supported by our staff to self-serve, where possible, while also getting the help they need for more complex enquiries.
- All new digital services are being built with self and assisted service given top priority, allowing residents to seek assistance at any point when using them. This allows customer service staff to either fully or partially complete processes on behalf of residents using exactly the same online form as self-serving customers, thereby streamlining our processes whilst helping residents get online
- We recognise that despite the increase in – and improvement to – our digital services, there will always be residents unable or unwilling to use them. As a result, we continue our commitment to providing telephone support, as well as face-to-face support. However, as more people go online and self-serve, telephone resource will be freed up to spend additional time with those residents that need it most.

Wi-Fi And public Access PC's





Appendix 3 - Preferred Methods of Payment

