



Ein cyf/Our ref MA/JB/1494/25

16 June 2025

Dear John,

Thank you for your letter following the Committee's inquiry into digital local government. I welcome the focus and reflections on this important agenda.

The Welsh Government is committed to working in close partnership with local government and other partners to realise the full potential of delivering sustainable, user-focused, digital transformation. We have agreed with local government that we will collaborate to achieve a digital service standard in the delivery of all public services. This shared commitment to digital will be reflected in the forthcoming Strategic Partnership Agreement which will be launched at the WLGA Conference later this month. We recognise that embedding digital ways of working will take time, but we are focused on working together to raise expectations in digital standards and deliver results. There are strong examples of innovation and impact across Wales which recognise that we are still on a journey to change the culture and understanding of how we work and deliver services digitally. The systems, standards and partnerships we are developing are part of this journey.

My role, as Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government is to facilitate and, where possible, accelerate this journey across the system. This approach requires sustained collective leadership, consistency and innovation, whilst concurrently delivering services within available resources. In that regard I believe the foundations are in place and, while this is a long-term ambition, we are confident in the direction and the shared commitment to progress.

Please find overleaf my responses to the specific questions raised in your letter. I look forward to continuing this dialogue.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

Alignment of national and local digital priorities

I recognise the importance of aligning national and local digital priorities, whilst respecting the independent democratic processes of both spheres of government.

The Digital Strategy for Wales has been designed to set out a national ambition for adopting a digital approach across Wales alongside ensuring effective implementation. Its high-level and stretching vision is to improve the lives of everyone in Wales through collaboration, innovation and better public services.

The very nature of long-term systemic and cultural change requires working in partnership to align national and local priorities. Our assessment remains that this strategy best supports the change we wish to see over the longer term. Our focus is on delivering the strategy as one of our Programme for Government commitments and currently there are no plans to review the strategy itself.

To ensure effective accountability and alignment between the strategic vision and implementation, the strategy contains six Mission areas including *Mission 1: Delivering and modernising services*. Progress is regularly reviewed across the six Mission areas.

To bridge the national strategy and local implementation £900,000 is provided through a top-slice of the Revenue Support Grant to fund the Local Government Chief Digital Officer (CDO) and her office. This role is pivotal in bridging national strategy with local implementation.

Alongside this, and since 2024-25, I have merged formerly separate funding streams for improvement and digital transformation into a single, strategic grant of £2.15m. Recognising the alignment of improvement and digital transformation, this funding also provides the basis for WLGA and local authorities to adopt a more strategic, long-term approach to digital transformation.

Leadership and Buy-In

I agree that leadership across Welsh and Local Government is essential to embedding digital transformation.

As outlined above, for local government the CDO was created to play a pivotal leadership role. The CDO is recognised as the primary point of contact for local authorities, ensuring that support is tailored, responsive, and grounded in sector needs. As noted in the WLGA's evidence to the Committee, the CDO has a key role in driving digital transformation in councils, advocating for digital in and for local government, raising the profile of digital leadership at senior levels in councils, and advocating for a recognition of the importance of digital. Recognising that changing mindsets and culture is a journey, not a single event, I am confident that the CDO is best placed to lead that change.

As is widely recognised the current fiscal and wider context remains challenging, but we also recognise the important role that digital plays in resolving these challenges. We are committed to doing all we can within available resources to enable and encourage local authorities to build long-term resilience.

As outlined, I have consolidated the separate grants to the WLGA for improvement and digital to create a single £2.15m grant. Discussions are advanced on how this funding can be best deployed in 2025-26 and beyond. This funding supports the WLGA to develop a sector-led improvement programme that improves sector capacity and capability to deliver user-centred council services. They are developing a vision with local government that recognises the value and impact of digitally-enabled, user centred services.

The Centre for Digital Public Services (CDPS), also an important partner, is enabling this change. Its priorities for this year are:

- cross-public sector work – such as setting common standards, signposting to a service manual and patterns and components, undertaking service assessments and delivering training;
- supporting the Welsh Government in the delivery of its own services – by developing and delivering training for senior civil servants, managing gov.wales domain and supporting WG to take advantage of the opportunities from UK Government Digital Service activities; and,
- supporting the delivery of Welsh Government priorities including work on the planning service, streamlining Welsh benefits and neurodiversity services.

Funding model and strategic investment

I recognise the limitations that annual confirmation of funding poses for local government partners and the impact on planning and approving projects beyond a financial year. This situation reflects the constraints on the Welsh Government which are outside of our control, such as timing of UK fiscal events, election cycles and our limited fiscal flexibilities.

My officials have been working with the WLGA over the last year to develop a revised funding model. This would enable the current programme to develop greater coherence and focus on a longer-term planning horizon for sector led improvement based on a philosophy of 'once for Wales'. This includes separate grants and processes are being consolidated to support a more strategic approach.

I have already written to the WLGA to confirm that I would support a rolling three-year commitment of funding to them to provide sector-led improvement, subject to specific arrangements which are under active discussion. This will require mutual commitment and shared accountability, and we believe it will deliver mutual benefits over time. I am confident we will be able to provide further detail of the future arrangements in coming weeks.

Digital Service Standards and Spend Controls

The Digital Strategy for Wales is about designing digital services that people choose to use because they are streamlined, convenient, modern and accessible.

The Welsh Government does not have levers to mandate spend controls. While sectors in Wales have their own levers, each local authority is a separate legal entity.

The CDPS is undertaking a programme of cross public sector work to develop and promote a service manual, service assessments, skills and patterns and components. These will all support the Welsh public sector's ability to deliver against service standards for Wales.

We agree that consistent application of standards is essential, and we are supporting the development of tools and guidance to help local authorities embed these in their service design processes.

Collaboration and comparative learning

The Welsh Government regularly collaborates and shares learning on digital and data strategy, policy and delivery with the other devolved administrations and the UK Government. The Welsh Government plays an active role in convening a Devolved Administration working group which provides a platform for officials to discuss a range of aspects of digital transformation.

The Welsh Government is part of an informal AI and Automation network with Scotland, Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland which enables sharing and collaborating, as well as identifying mutual opportunities for re-using technology and tools.

More widely in Europe, the Welsh Government has a Memorandum of Understanding with Flanders. This enables us to share best practice and experience on the digital, data and technology agenda, including cyber resilience and security.

The Welsh Government is also a member of the Disruptive and Emerging Technologies Alliance. This is an alliance of national and regional governments across the world, enabling us to learn and collaborate on emerging and disruptive technologies around Artificial Intelligence, cyber and digital rights.

Digital skills and capacity

The salary for the CDO role is set by the WLGA and reflects current budgetary constraints. It reflects the strategic importance of the Chief Digital Officer role in delivering digital transformation across local government in Wales. The CDO has been appointed having demonstrated these qualities and has the full support of both the Welsh Government and the WLGA.

The Welsh Government is encouraging a range of collaboration across public and private sectors and academia to develop digital skills needed now and in the future.

In respect of cyber, the Welsh Government is working collaboratively across sectors to deliver the [Cyber Action Plan for Wales](#), including with industry, academia, public services, UK Government and the National Cyber Security Centre. One of the priority areas of the Plan is to build a pipeline of cyber talent.

This includes our £9.5m investment in the [Cyber Innovation Hub](#), led by Cardiff University, brings together industry, government, defence and academic partners to grow the Welsh cyber security sector and create a coordinated approach to skills, innovation and new enterprise. It is training more than 1,500 individuals with cyber security skills and deliver bespoke training to provide industry and public services with the skills they need.

Alongside this, the [Hartree Centre Cardiff Hub](#) provides SMEs with access to the large base of AI and data science research and innovation expertise in Cardiff University. It is a regional extension of the Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation, which is part of UK Research and Innovation.

Our Curriculum for Wales gives digital competence the same emphasis as numeracy and literacy and we are working with industry to understand the needs of the cyber and digital sectors. We also provide resources to support school age learners to develop basic cyber skills through our national digital learning platform, Hwb, and engaging schools with wider UK programmes such as CyberFirst.

We are engaging with industry to consider how funding available through our Flexible Skills Programme can be targeted specifically to encourage careers in cyber and digital, supporting employers upskill their staff to meet future economy needs. We have also developed bespoke Digital Personal Learning Accounts to help employed people upskill and reskill.

To support development of digital skills in the public sector, the Centre for Digital Public Services has convened an Automation and AI Community of Practice, holding regular events for public service workers and involving industry experts to explore aspects of AI literacy and awareness.

The CDPS has also worked in partnership with Gower College Swansea to develop a User Centred Design apprenticeship. Its first 3 students graduated in 2025. The apprenticeship provided on job training with CDPS on service design, user research and content development, as well as a formal qualification from the College.

User-centred design and service improvement

I agree that digital transformation must be rooted in service improvement. While many local authorities report having user-centred design capability, we recognise that depth and consistency vary.

The Digital Strategy for Wales is about driving a culture change – being open, using data to solve problems and, critically, putting people at the heart of all we do. We must ensure that our public services are designed around the people that use them so that they are efficient, convenient and simple to use. The Digital Service Standards for Wales describe what is meant by user-centred design in more detail and the CDPS and CDO are important partners in supporting local government to understand and apply these consistently. Similarly, the WLGA plays an important role in sharing practice and knowledge across local government.

Data and information sharing – WCCIS and Connecting Care

I recognise the comments made by Committee regarding the historic challenges with WCCIS. The new governance arrangements we are putting in place is intended to steer the Connecting Care programme towards an integrated and future-proofed approach. This reflects our commitment to improving data sharing and service integration across health and social care. We are focused on ensuring that the new model delivers tangible improvements for service users and staff alike. However, I acknowledge that effective digital systems are only a part of the solution to supporting information sharing, effective information governance and information sharing agreements and processes are also critical to allow us to realise the benefits

Yours sincerely,



Jayne Bryant AS/MS

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Lywodraeth Leol a Thai

Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government