

Ways of Working: From paper and hierarchy to hybrid and AI

40 years • across 5 decades

Hierarchies and paper

- › Hierarchy, office-based and silos
- › Paper sign-offs
- › IT as back-office support
- › LGR: Metropolitan councils abolished, powers passed down to boroughs

▲ **Challenge:** risk-averse culture, slow innovation (“safe, established solutions”)

1980s

1990s

Email changes pace

- › PCs and email accelerate communication
- › Websites mostly “online brochures”
- › Partnership working and joined-up government
- › LGR: Review leads to more unitary councils and Wales moves fully to unitary authorities

▲ **Challenge:** silos remain, IT still separate from frontline services, governance blocks cross-cutting innovation.

2000s

E-government goes live

- › Public services online and e-forms
- › Customer service and IT teams join up
- › Multi-disciplinary project teams starting to emerge
- › LGR: Stronger leadership, cabinet-style governance and elected mayors

▲ **Challenge:** fragmented tech from department-by-department procurement, entrenched structures slow progress.

2010s

Agile and cloud

- › New management methods (agile, user-centred design, open collaboration)
- › New tech (cloud, mobile, social media) enable collaboration
- › Digital leadership grows
- › LGR: Localism Act expands council powers, public health returns to councils and devolution and combined authorities focused on regional growth.

▲ **Challenge:** early in the decade, technology adoption outpaces organisational change, pace varies across organisations.

2020s

Hybrid, AI and reorganisation

- › COVID- 19 forces remote work
- › Hybrid working becomes normal
- › GenAI enters daily tasks
- › LGR: Shift to larger unitary councils to simplify structures, improve efficiency and respond to financial pressures.

▲ **Challenge:** local government reorganisation requiring harmonising services, integrating systems, redesigning operating models while keeping services running.

So what?

- › Tools help, but culture decides speed.
- › Collaboration beats silos for complex demand.
- › Skills and leadership make change stick.
- › Digital, Data and Technology must be considered together as a single, integrated capability

What changes next

- › DDaT becomes a strategic partner.
- › Projects shift to outcomes-focused and place-based models
- › Platforms and shared data enable place-based work.
- › A shift to a multidisciplinary approach: different organisations working together around the needs of their communities.