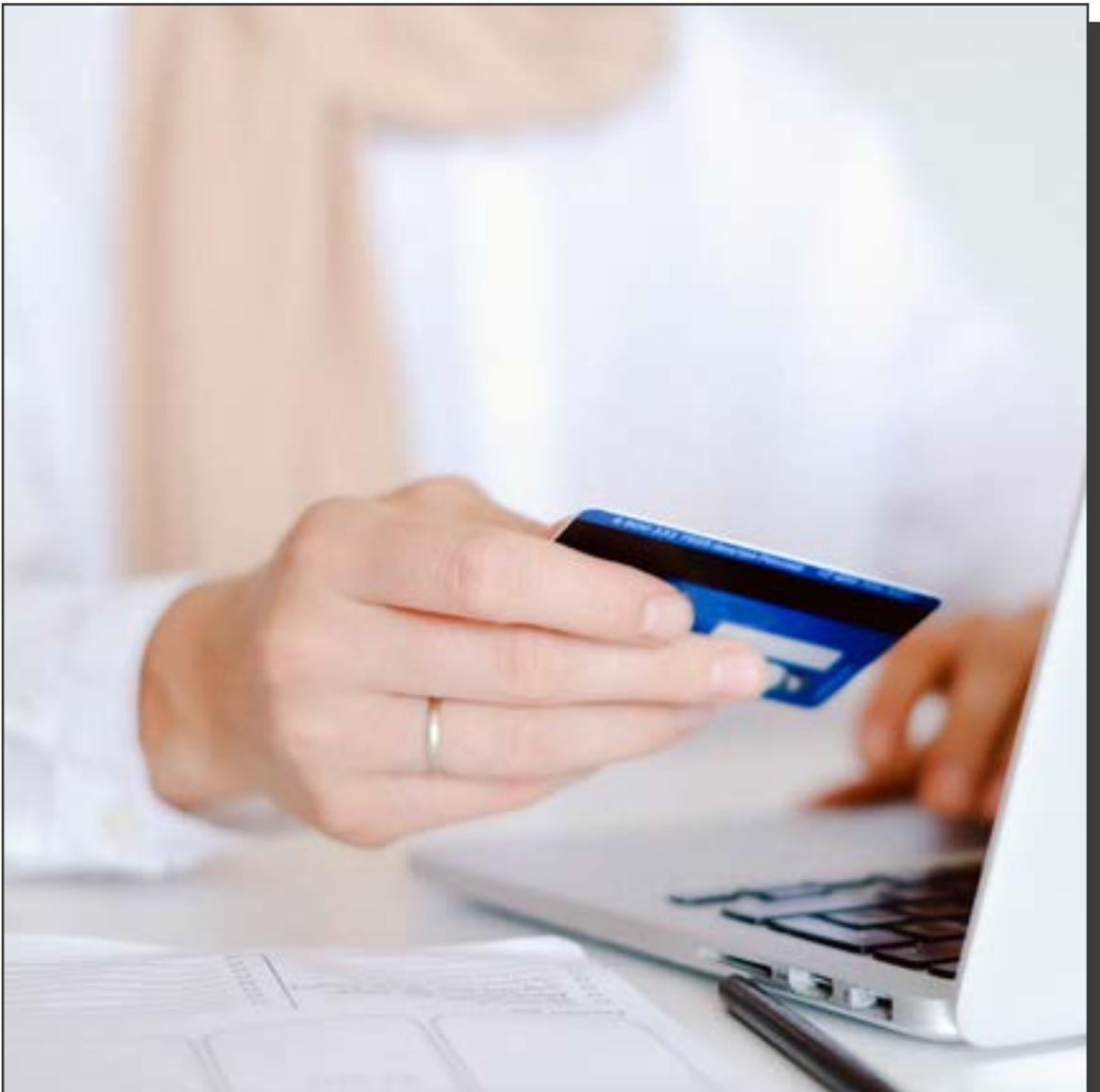


**Digital four:
Transforming the places
we live and work and
promoting community
wealth and health.**

The digital sector has shown itself to be proactive and resilient throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Enabling the digital economy to grow and flourish in the borough will help build skills, jobs and prosperity for our people and our place, supporting our ambitions to build a resilient and inclusive economy.

Whether it's job opportunities, new skills, or the chance to run their own businesses, there are many digital opportunities for business and employment growth.

We want to connect our residents to fulfilling roles in the digital world.



Growing Digital Talent & Skills

Digital talent and ensuring greater diversity of talent is one of the key attractors for investment and economic growth in the digital sector. Building the digital skills, capacities, aspirations and entrepreneurial capability of all residents will be a prerequisite to not just attracting new digital businesses and sectors but ensuring our residents can find, keep, and flourish in digital work, as well as growing ideas and innovation for a new generation of start-ups in the borough.

We will build innovative and inclusive routes into employment and skills and doing so starts young, with getting schools and colleges on board to help remove barriers to education and employment in digital skills and promote the importance of STEM subjects and job opportunities at all levels of the education system. We need to work closely with universities and colleges to improve their capacity for producing digital talent which meets the needs of the sector in the short and medium term.

As well as learning for the first time, we also have increased numbers of people looking to switch to a role in digital or enter the industry for the first time in their career, those looking for employment in the digital industry need greater support to navigate their way into the industry and to be ready for a role. Digital skills development is a key part of our Employment and Skills strategy and action plan. We will identify the digital skills gaps and work with GM partners on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to develop learning programmes to ensure adults have the core skills they need to enter the labour market.

We will work with Jobcentre Plus and other employment providers to ensure local skills delivery is fit for purpose and

enables residents to achieve the required skills. Providing access and pathways to digital skills will enable people to safeguard existing jobs and meet the needs of those recently unemployed or underemployed as they transition from declining sectors of the economy, supporting the creation of more higher quality jobs, helping residents to further realise their potential.

Some areas of the digital industry do not have clear progression pathways to a specific job role. They need to be encouraged and supported to develop more flexible routes into digital areas to remove barriers to engagement and support individuals who's educational and employment background is less traditional, thus creating greater inclusivity and social mobility in the industry. We will encourage skills providers to design training and skills programmes which best reflect needs of digital employers, to build stronger transition activity which progresses individuals from training into employment to ensure everyone has the opportunity to have a good, successful career in the industry.



Innovation & Entrepreneurialism

This has been a difficult time for our residents and businesses and the future for many looks uncertain. This calls for a new approach which fosters innovation and entrepreneurialism in our borough.

The digital strengths of our residents will create new opportunities for our local economy. We will support community wealth by identifying local business opportunities that will arise from the move towards a low carbon future e.g., renewable energy, sustainable transport, smart technologies, research and development. We will identify technology and innovation options and establish and maintain the Wigan Council website as an up-to-date, informative source of climate change information, linking partners and their plans together.

We will lead by example and build an Anchor Partnership and Business Consortium to build back a fairer economy and support our Artisan Traders to achieve their aspirations. We will continue to support and interact with our local business community, as we did during the pandemic through the distribution of grants and business support to help them through an incredibly challenging time. Through our Community Wealth Building approach, we will encourage a greater diversity of businesses in which wealth is shared between owners, workers and consumers. We will support different models of business such as small enterprises, community organisations, co-operatives and municipal ownership. This will involve more digital support so that locally owned and socially minded enterprises can come sustainable and prosper.

To support new and existing digital businesses, we will establish innovation hubs to help them use technology to improve their products, services and processes to

boost market prowess and competitiveness. The hubs will provide the guidance and wraparound support that businesses need in these challenging times to grow and thrive. We will nurture new and fledgling businesses and support our local entrepreneurs to develop new business models with guidance on using digital platforms more effectively.

We will develop a support framework with partners for residents who are keen to start a new business in the local areas. This framework will provide digital advice to develop an online offer to maximise their business potential, whether through presence on google searches to full sales system. We will provide clear packages of advice and financial support for entrepreneurs, giving clear understanding of the support available when setting up a business in the borough.

By providing affordable office, collaboration, work and retail spaces for entrepreneurs to meet, we will support the establishment of a new entrepreneur group where experiences can be shared, businesses can collaborate and share support to increase the potential success of their innovations and business ventures.



Case Study – Boutique X Colette moves online

For one local business, what used to be ‘bricks and mortar’ is now ‘clicks and mortar.’

Colette Parr, owner of Boutique X Colette Ltd, a women’s clothing retailer in Wigan, suffered with complete cessation of trade and the temporary closure of her shop when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and all non-essential retail was required to close. Now, she has managed to turn her clothing boutique around after contacting Wigan Council for business support.

Prior to the pandemic, Boutique X Colette had previously only traded from their retail location with no e-commerce provision.

“We really needed to rethink how we are going to get the revenue in because there was nothing.” Colette says. **“It was quite frightening.”**

“We got in touch with Wigan Council and they were really supportive” Colette added.

The Digital Growth Advisor supported Boutique X Colette to develop their digital strategy to incorporate e-commerce and trading through online marketplaces on social media, as well as to develop a digital marketing strategy to support the launch of the website.

The Digital Growth Advisor is an invaluable dedicated resource for Wigan Borough, jointly funded by Wigan Council and the GM Growth Company, which provides free support to help local businesses to make the most of their digital ambitions and understand how to leverage digital to enable their business to grow.

The support Boutique X Colette received delivers our ambitions to build community wealth by enabling a valuable local business to continue trading and develop additional and sustainable revenue streams that support the business in continuing to prosper.

“We did not have the cash to actually go and get somebody to build a website for us.” “I can’t thank them enough for the help they’ve given me. It has been amazing. It really has made a difference to my business” Colette said of the free support.

“Going online has made a massive impact to revenue for the business which we desperately needed.”



Future Place

Despite the success of The Deal, Wigan still faces a range of health & social, economic and environmental challenges which have been magnified by the pandemic.

It is essential that we respond with radical, forward thinking interventions and identify how digital technologies can transform the places we live and work, one in which the decisions we make today support our recovery and future resilience.

The way we engage with society and our community has changed and want to be able to share our future visions and create virtual immersible experiences which our residents and visitors can explore.

Through our Healthier Wigan Partnership we will develop an ethical framework for our Digital Wigan Smart Cities programme that focusses on leveraging smart technology to support, enable and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents. This will be a key feature of our COVID recovery as a borough and we will co-design this approach with communities and business, to create a framework for testing and scaling

approaches.

We will welcome a generation that is led by a constant supply of data to a vibrant night-time economy and a new housing, retail and leisure offer which includes digital activities such as e-sports.

We will deliver an attractive town centre offer and evaluate how digital infrastructure in our towns can establish local links with the community and highlight what is on offer.

In the next two years we have the Rugby League World Cup & Women's Euro's coming to the borough. By holding these two key sporting events at Leigh Sports Village, it gives us the chance to demonstrate and take forward some of the opportunities around smart technology, this will include sharing information with visitors, local community promotion as well as getting to understand how we develop landscapes, shape our traffic flow around the town.

We will create a legacy of digital learning from these experiences.



Green Wigan

As our residents become environmentally conscious and aware of the need to address climate change, going digital should also mean going 'green'.

We have an ambitious work programme in our Environment Directorate which involves refitting our council homes and properties to be more eco-friendly, adopting new 'In-Cab' technology for waste services to reduce mileage, bin sensors to remove non-essential tasks, ensuring we deliver the services when they are needed.

New digital technology is at the forefront of the green revolution and will support our ambitions and new innovative software

will transform how residents report and receive information on bin collections whilst improving performance monitoring and better data collection for the service.

To support our residents, we will showcase new technologies and digital design, which focusses on climate change benefits and making our homes environmentally friendly.

Wigan Council has reaffirmed its commitment to achieve carbon neutral status by 2038 or sooner and this digital strategy will support our plans for a cleaner, greener borough.



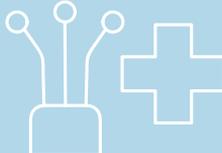
Improving our Infrastructure

Our ambition is for a competitive market for high-speed connectivity to lower costs for businesses and homes and remove some of the social, economic and environmental effects that lack of connectivity creates.

Improving connectivity will provide more Wigan residents with access to wider job opportunities online with the potential to benefit from employment and increased salaries. It will also reduce isolation for our older residents, increase community

engagement and confidence with health technologies to deliver costs savings on hospital admissions.

There will be a reduction in carbon emissions resulting in the shift from physical to digital products. To drive this forward we are part of the UK's largest Local Full Fibre Network Programme which provides new infrastructure to the Greater Manchester region.

 <p>Virgin Media 2,700km new fibre optic broadband</p>	 <p>Increases Market investment in Fibre.</p>
 <p>Connects 1500 public service sites across GM.</p>	 <p>Minimises rollout costs for 5G for providers.</p>
 <p>Over 118 sites in Wigan get NEW access to ultra-fast broadband.</p>	 <p>Creates 20 Apprenticeship in GM.</p>
 <p>Leads to Broadband providers increasing additional connections.</p>	

In line with Wigan Council's Community Wealth Building principles, the LFFN programme will see Virgin Media Business investing in digital and STEM skills for young people, as well as the creation of 20 apprenticeships based in Greater Manchester and support for Greater Manchester-wide priorities including digital inclusion and education.

We are also working to expand our outdoor community Wi-Fi network with the WiFi4EU initiative funding free access for members

of the public in Pennington Park and Pennington Flashes. By installing Wi-Fi at this destination, the public network will benefit residents as well as visitors and tourists to surrounding areas such as Leigh Sports village. The Wi-Fi will also provide additional infrastructure to support future events held in the park and flashes.

We will continue to embed the digital agenda in everything we do and keep improving our digital service to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents.

Together We Will:

Key Pledges	Timeline
<p>Use the 2021 and 2022 sporting events at Leigh Sports Village to test and develop digital innovations in areas such as waste management, climate change, local economic & employment opportunities.</p>	2021-22
<p>Enable the creation of Innovation/Entrepreneurial Hubs across the borough, which support and encourage –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Incubation Space for Businesses · Innovation opportunities to Digital tech · Skills and Training access for all · Collaborative Workspace & Shared Learning · Digital Growth and Business Support/Guidance 	2021-22
<p>Provide more public opportunity for digital engagement and immersive experiences to set the scene for the future of our borough via economic regeneration & growth.</p>	2022- 2023
<p>Through collaborative workspace, explore the establishment of entrepreneurial networks which will promote innovation and economic growth for our borough aligned with our Economic Recovery and Community Wealth Building policies and work with our Digital Community Partnership.</p>	By 2024
<p>Support the GM wide LFFN delivery for ultra-fast broadband.</p>	By 2025
<p>Develop the digital offer to support hospital discharge, reablement, supported living and wider social care needs, working with partners to use technology.</p>	By 2025