Wigan Council

Digital Strategy

2021 – 2025

The Deal
2030

The Deal

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Introduction

Cllr Rehman,

Cabinet Member for Resources, Finance and Transformation and Chair of Wigan's Digital Board

It is my great pleasure to endorse our new Digital Strategy to 2025, to ensure that our public services continue to transform and that all our residents and businesses can benefit from the transformative potential of digital.

We have a track record at Wigan Council of investing in digital transformation to improve our services to residents and businesses and to do so in a way that isn't fixated on the technology but on doing the right things to help our residents to lead healthy and happy lives.

During the 10 years of our Deal 2030 Strategy the world and our communities will be transformed again through the digital developments that will enhance (and potentially cause harm) to the lives of our residents. 5G, full dark fibre, Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Smart Cities and ubiquitous internet of things devices will all impact on all aspects of our lives from education, health, employment opportunities and our physical infrastructure and what we do and how we do it as public services.

We have to be focused and invested in ensuring our residents have the digital skills and confidence to thrive and to ensure Wigan Borough is known as a place with huge digital talent; we need to create the conditions for digital businesses and entrepreneurs to see Wigan Borough as an exciting choice to start, locate and scale their digital business; we need to support

existing businesses to seize the opportunity to enhance their business digitally; and importantly we must transform our work as public services so that we can meet the needs of our residents in better ways in line with our Deal principles.

This strategy has been finalised during the global COVID-19 pandemic that has brought such devastation to families, businesses and communities. But amongst the tragedy of 2020 we experienced rapid deployment of digital transformation in all aspects of our lives, breaking down the types of barriers that we never thought possible and accelerating the implementation of 5-10-year plans in a matter of days and weeks.

This strategy is designed to build on that opportunity, but to do so in a way that continues to enhance humanity and kindness in our public services by applying digital to our Deal Principles, not removing humanity from public service through poorly thought-out technology.

The implications of the pandemic shone a light on structural health and wealth inequalities in our country. In our Deal 2030 strategy, Wigan Council have committed to a policy of Community Wealth Building and we see this Digital Strategy as a major factor in that overarching policy.

Therefore, universal access to digital tools (devices and connectivity), digital confidence and skills is more important than it has ever been and we will work tirelessly with our Digital Communities Partnership to bridge the digital divide so that all residents and businesses in this borough can benefit from the opportunities that digital provides whilst protecting themselves and others from potential harms.
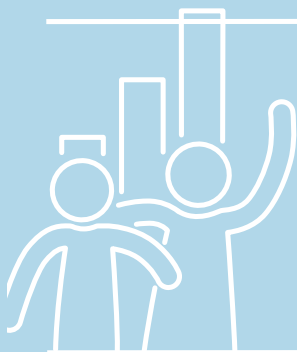
#Digital Place

Wigan has 328,000 residents today, projected to increase to almost **338,000** by 2030

The number of residents aged 65 and over will increase by almost **20%** in the next 10 years

Wigan Council has delivered savings of over **£150m** in the last 10 years

Over **11 million** people in the UK don't have the basic skills they need to thrive in today's world

There are over **8,000** children in the borough in receipt of free school meals

#Digital Council

The Wigan Council website gets an average of **450,000** visits each month and over **2 million** page views

Twitter for @Digital Wigan **200,000** impressions and **6,000** engagements in the past 12 months.

There are over **60,000** active 'My Account' users

Accessibility for our website is **2nd best** in the UK.
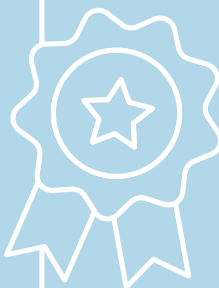
Our borough residents have achieved over **26,000** iDEA learning badges

Digital one:
Transforming the way
we work as a council

Wigan Council has developed a way of carrying out public services known as The Deal. The principles and the intent of the Deal are simple but have had a profound impact on how we work and on the approach and behaviours of our workforce.

In the simplest terms, The Deal is about seeing the human being behind the statistic or assessment, unlocking deep insight through a different conversation that is asset based, not focused on what people can't do and connecting residents and businesses to the thriving assets we have in our communities. For our workforce, The Deal means being encouraged to innovate, to share ideas and to implement them bravely.

To demonstrate our behaviours of being positive, accountable, courageous and kind, we will listen carefully to what our residents, businesses and communities value and work alongside them to protect and enhance our wonderful borough.

Our Deal 2030 strategy and the ideas and priorities that our residents shared through our Big Listening Project have shaped this Digital Strategy and the priorities within it.

The GM Digital Blueprint also provides us with a clear direction to place residents at the heart of our plans and our strategy supports the ambitions of the city region.

To be successful, Digital Wigan will enhance the impact of The Deal and further the ambition and intent that we have been developing here for many years now. A new and sharper focus on Community Wealth and Health is also a key factor in this digital strategy as we transform how we work in this organisation.

To deliver the Digital Strategy, our Digital & ICT Services will support and lead our workforce and partners along their service transformation journeys providing business related digital and systems guidance, technical understanding, and user centered design of systems and processes. Working collaboratively across the council to deliver outcomes which improve efficiency, maximise capacity and bring together relatable data to drive forward our 2030 ambitions.

100% Digitally Enabled

As many of our services and ways of working have embraced digital technologies over the years, the ways in which large parts of our workforce engage with the organisation have become digital also. Having a single digital identity as an employee makes it easier to book leave, report absence, access employee benefits and engage with important digital communications.

For many years we've had regular and successful engagement for our workforce, to hear from, ask questions of and share ideas with senior leaders including the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council. During the pandemic, these sessions evolved to become entirely digital and have proven to be an excellent way of staying connected.

Our workforce have overwhelmingly embraced the new digital format in which we engage with them. However, we still have large parts of our operational workforce in Environmental Services and Adult Services who do not have a single digital identity.

During our first year of this strategy, we will ensure the entire workforce is provided with a single digital identity and remove the less timely, more expensive and bureaucratic ways of carrying out these activities and engaging with the organisation.

As our staff gain their digital identity, we will ensure they have access to learning and resources to grow and develop digital confidence. We will create access to a variety or resources and pathways to allow learning to become user driven whilst aligned to career and organisational ambitions. In doing this we will become a truly digitally enabled workforce and organisation with our own pipeline of talent locally.
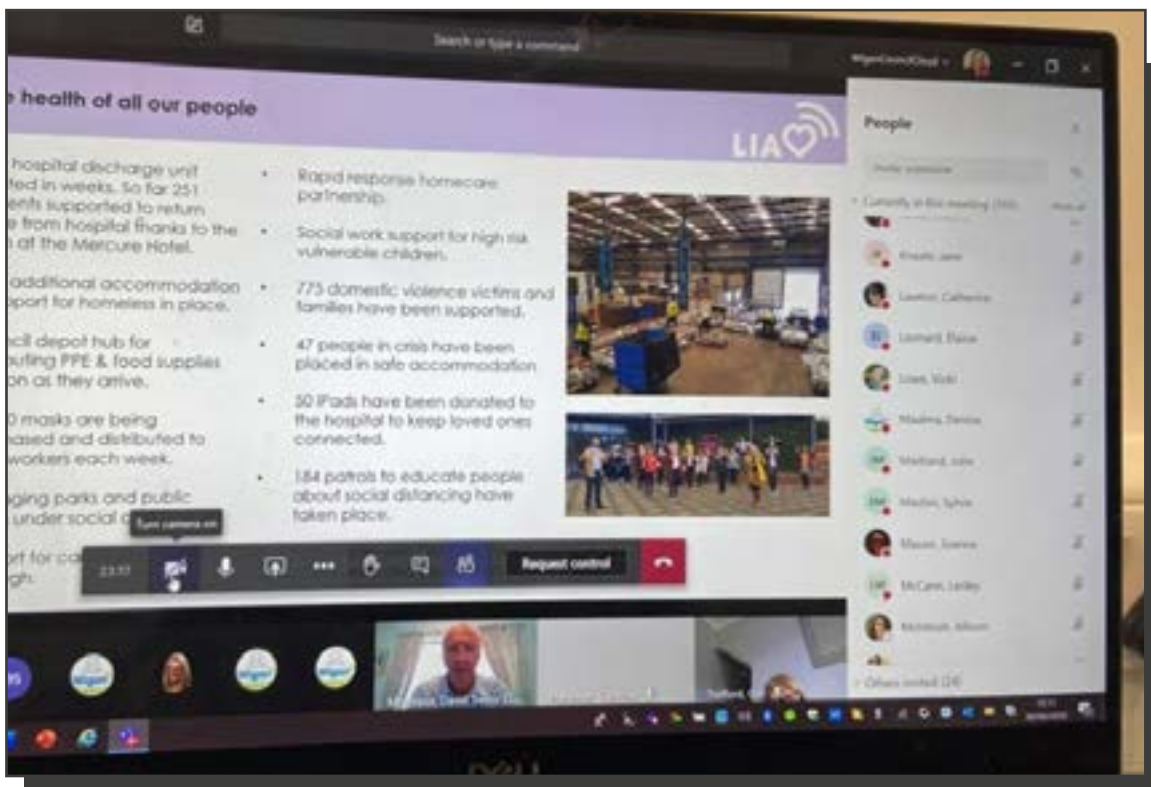
Digital Workforce

Our workforce carry out critical services for our residents and businesses, and as such we spend a significant amount of money on devices such as laptops and mobile phones for our staff. Whilst we use established procurement frameworks to ensure good value for money and internal controls to monitor and control spend, the benefits from this spend fall largely outside of our borough.

As a key principle of our Community Wealth Building ambitions, we must move to a position where the majority of digital devices for staff are purchased from local businesses and suppliers. But we can go even further. Significant work to strengthen the resilience of our digital infrastructure meant that we could move all our staff to remote home working at the onset of the pandemic. To facilitate that we asked the workforce to use their own devices through our already established Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) processes wherever possible.

As we adjust to our new future as an organisation, we believe that BYOD and Choose Your Own Device (CYOD) will become the norm for the duration of this digital strategy. These approaches provide more flexibility for our workforce who do not want to be constrained with council standard devices but prefer to use their own equipment – many with unlimited data bundles.

We believe that our workforce would want to help prioritise council spend on essential services where possible and have demonstrated their willingness to use their own devices to support that. We want to make that easier to do and to ensure staff are not adversely affected in any way including financially, by doing so. So rather than the council purchasing and replacing vast amounts of digital kit for staff, we will serve up digital resources, systems and services safely and securely to the workforces' own devices.

We will support our workforce to move to a flexible sustainable model, by trialling CYOD – where staff receive an allowance to purchase devices (and can top up from the standard allowance themselves). We believe that by the end of the period covered by this digital strategy, the requirement for a good internet connection and a device will become as standard a requirement as a full clean UK driving licence.

Working Differently

We have encouraged flexible and remote working for some time as an organisation. This has enabled our facilities management strategy to reduce the number of administrative buildings we have, contributing to significant financial savings. But there hasn't been a fundamental shift in the way we work of this size since the introduction of email.

The experience of working through the global pandemic has facilitated that fundamental shift and our workforce have expressed their hope that we retain many of the benefits of working in this new way - less wasted time commuting, better work life balance, increased focus and productivity, finding better ways of doing things and the benefits to the environment – whilst finding a way to safely and effectively reintroduce things that we have missed such as direct personal contact with colleagues.
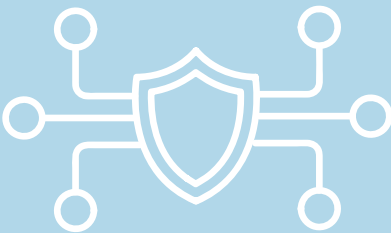
The graphics below are based on data collected between March and December 2020.
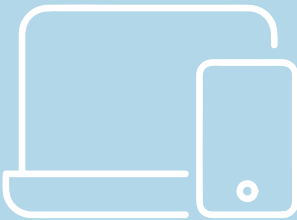
Over **100,000** MS Teams meetings facilitated

Over **9,000** virus attacks blocked.

More than **5 million** emails sent out and over **14 million** received.

Support provided for over **2,400** laptops and phones across the workforce.

Online booking system for targeted testing developed with over **900** bookings in the first month.

Working differently is here for everyone and is not just a short-term measure in response to the pandemic or recovery phase - it's our way of working for the long term! We believe it is about being thoughtful about the tasks we need to achieve every day. It's about doing our work in the most effective way; to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people we serve, whilst making the best use of public money.

It isn't just about working from home or desk sharing...It is....

· Thinking about how we can all use the resources and space around us to work in the best way possible

· Considering how to achieve the best outcomes for our residents and customers.

· Using other buildings and facilities that may be closer to our customers and partners.

· Trying out new digital technology

· Saving time and travel across the borough

· Making new connections

Colleagues are developing our working differently approach based on our vision to create space within offices and place-based areas that are re-purposed for conversational connections and touch down bases where collaboration, networking, partnership working, and development can take place.

Flexibility will be key in our new way of working, adopting a blended approach whether that be at home **(my place)**, office buildings **(our place)** and within the community **(your place)** or a mixture. We will be asking staff to consider a digital first approach in the first instance.

A behaviour change programme will support staff and teams to think about their roles and associated activities and consider the best place and way to work that will deliver the best outcomes. It is about working in the right place, whether that be working from:

· **My Place** – Supporting individuals to work from home.

· **Our Place**- Enabling individuals to work from council buildings.

· **Your Place** – Working within the community

We know that work can be more productively achieved at home and elsewhere in a way that promotes our environmental ambitions.

During 2020 we have worked very closely with our Elected Members to ensure that we have been able to deliver our full council meetings online and via video conferencing as well as creating a new virtual court room.

Microsoft Teams is our preferred video conferencing technology and has been positively embraced by Councillors and our workforce and will become our approach for internal and external telephony (supported by wi-fi calling for mobiles) during the period of this digital strategy, removing the need for desk-based phones.

Attending conferences or collaborative sector meetings is something we value due to the opportunities this offers to network, gain valuable insight and share learning with peers. Before lockdown and the pandemic, this would only happen with a physical presence, so if travel was not feasible then attendance was not always possible. Due to the wide adoption of remote and virtual meetings and conferences by sector partners, our policy is to attend and be more present via remote access through digital technology.

Through our hybrid approach and investment in digital technologies, we will sustain this level of saving and help to protect the environmental impact long into the future.

We will actively reduce the number of printers in our buildings and encourage a zero- printing culture.

My place   **Our place**   **Your place**

Our key service systems

Secure and effective systems are vital to our critical public services running effectively. At Wigan we take system resilience, user and data security very seriously.

Our Digital Strategy and delivery aligns closely to our Chief Technical Officer (CTO) ICT Partnership strategy, which supports and develops our technical infrastructure and governance, ensuring that all technical solutions which are adopted and deployed across the authority are robust, resilient and secure.

This programme has responsibility to carry out due diligence and assess new systems, hardware, technologies to make sure we are implementing the most suitable solution in the soundest way which fits our organisational needs.

Our ICT Service Delivery team, work to keep the lights on 24/7, making sure all systems are online and data is backed up and secure. They also handle any work which needs technical support relating to our infrastructure.

We will continue to ensure we have the best-in-class systems for our key services. We are committed to a full and regular audit of our systems and their suitability to how we want to work.

Over recent years we have seen a small number of multi-national companies controlling the market for a number of these key and critical service areas.

We want to be agile and flexible to ensure the design of our services and the digital systems that support them are always fit for the internet age.

Future of Data

Data and intelligence are vital to achieving our ambitions in Deal 2030 and they are critical to reshaping and remodelling the delivery of high quality, preventative and targeted services.

We hold and safely control a significant amount of information relating to our communities, residents and businesses. Often this information is in multiple systems as individuals and businesses utilise and engage with our services at different parts of their user journey. Bringing this information together to get a rounded and as full a picture as possible and utilising analytical tools will contribute to significant savings through more effective and preventative support as well as tackling fraud and making effective business decisions.

Over the next 5 years we are committed to designing and building a fully connected data 'warehouse' which will link together our disconnected systems and business areas, allowing information to be analysed across the place, with the capacity and capability to predict future design and delivery models. We have already started this work to help support our Covid-19 response and supporting our communities, which quickly demonstrated the need to formalise this across the council.

We are an enthusiastic signatory to the Open Data Manchester Declaration for Responsible Data Practice and we have pledged to 'Do Data Better' for local people by 2025. We recognise that we are the custodians of personal data that we collect and process and therefore have a moral and ethical duty of care in its handling. We will conduct a full review of our data use, collection, processing and retention approach to guarantee we meet the pledges of the declaration by the end of the framework for this strategy, 2025.

Together We Will:

Key Pledges	Timeline
Review our printing and telephony strategies for the organisation to enable reduction of our carbon footprint further and increase saving potential around these areas.	2021
Provide all employees with their own single digital identity to enable access to all digital engagement and employee toolkits.	By early 2022
Create a Workforce Digital Experience which provides all the essential information our teams need to adopt a digital first approach and use digital ways of working to meet our organisational goals.	By 2022
Continue to develop and create an organisational wide data warehouse, with access to real time business intelligence and data insight across multiple systems and areas.	By end of 2022
Ensure a minimum 15% of the council digital device spend benefits local businesses and suppliers which supports our Community Wealth Building policy.	By 2025
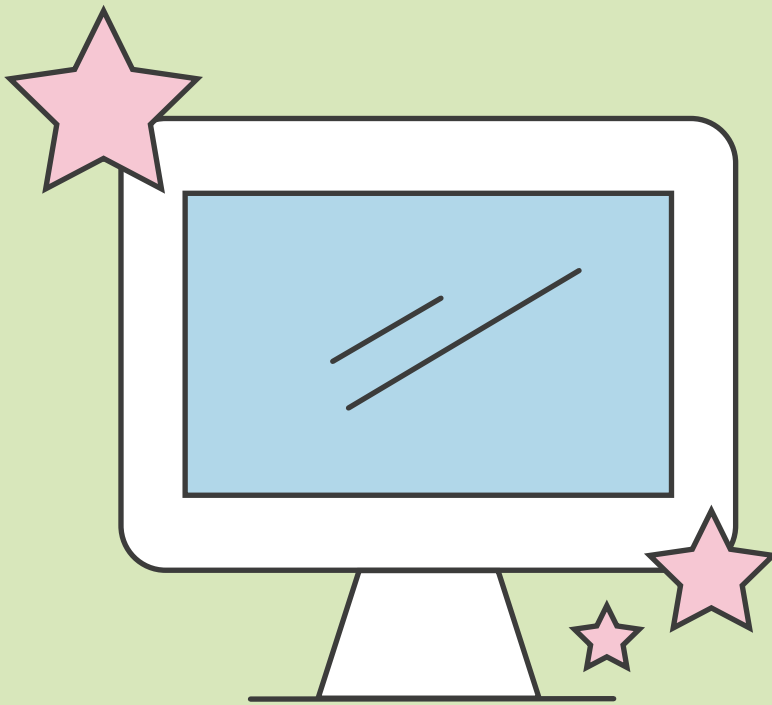
Digital two: Transforming how our services work for residents

A key principle of our Digital Strategy is that it's not about technology, it's about great service design, utilising the tools of the internet age to make it easier, faster and a more fulfilling experience when residents and businesses work with us.

This is what unites our Digital Strategy with our Deal principles – working alongside our residents and businesses not doing things to them. Therefore active listening, user-based design, testing and iteration are fundamental to our service transformation approaches, enabled by this Digital Strategy.

We will not implement new systems and approaches without fully understanding residents and their needs. We want our future transformation to carry out effective user engagement and testing in the design process so that we can create a seamless 'customer' journey and experience when you access our online services.

Under this strategy, we will outline a core set of design and delivery principles to safeguard our digital transformation across the organisation.

100% Digitally Enabled

This does not mean that we only provide digital ways of engaging with us. We know that telephone and face to face contact is vital for some of our residents. For those that can, we will ensure our digital service offer is a fantastic, connected offer that makes their lives easier. We want as many people as possible to be able to benefit from that. That is why we launched our #TechMates service that connects digitally skilled volunteers with residents who need support to get online. It has proven to be an incredibly valuable service during the pandemic when many of our face-to-face services had to close.

It is vitally important that we provide definitive support in the heart of our communities that people can access, and we will continue to grow this service during the period of this Digital Strategy.
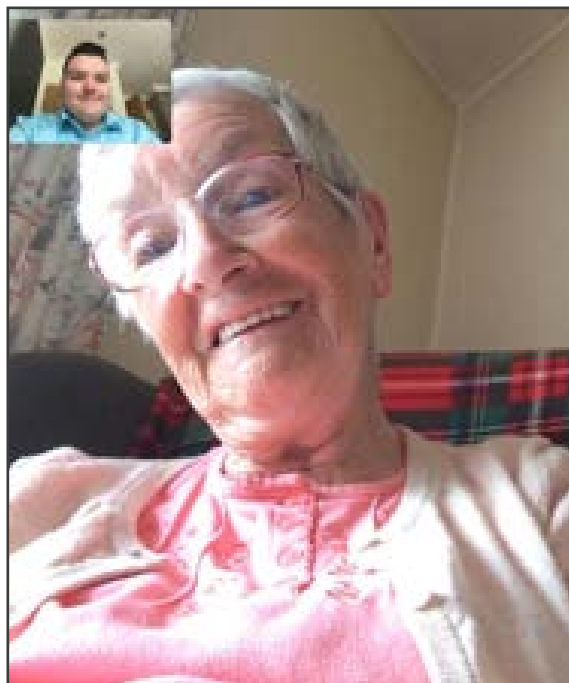
Case Study – TechMate for Pete and Kath

Pete and Kath, a local family from Shevington, had little experience with digital devices. Now, they are thriving in the world of technology thanks to the TechMates initiative, a digital mentor service run by volunteers and council staff to prevent isolation for the borough's most vulnerable residents.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the country went into a national lockdown, Kath could no longer access the services she enjoyed at Shevington Library. Getting online was no longer a choice, but a necessity for the couple to help them stay connected to the outside world and avoid feeling isolated whilst being unable to leave their home.

Wigan Council's TechMates programme, which provides residents with one-to-one basic digital support over the telephone, helped Pete and Kath to gain the skills needed to confidently access digital devices such as computers, tablets, smartphones and laptops and engage with online resources.

The support Pete and Kath have received from their TechMate, Sam, has opened up a world of possibilities for digital technology to improve their daily lives over the course of lockdown and beyond.

Pete said: **"We've had a lot of support from Sam who has done a tremendous job for us. He's teaching us things we didn't even know about!" "Now I can log onto my computer and play a game of snooker and watch old films from the forties!"**

"I have been able to connect with my friends at the library on Facetime, send emails and listen to music" Kath added.

"Before, my opinion was that computers should remain in the office and not at home!" Pete admitted. **"Since getting the iPad and the help from TechMates, we've now invested in a smart television and Amazon Alexa which has been brilliant"** Kath revealed. **"Everything is running superb—thank you Wigan Council!"**

Pete and Kath are now able to look forward to advancing their digital skills even further with help from their TechMate, Sam.

Sam said **"when I first met Kath and Pete, they were nervous to get online as they had never done anything like this before. I helped to build their confidence, did everything at a time and pace that suited them and after a few weeks Kath was able to email friends, family and get in touch with the local library which helped with social isolation. Pete exceeded my expectations as every week he learned something new such as booking a holiday, watching films, shopping online and even selling items on Shpock. I am extremely proud of Kath and Pete and what they have achieved, and I love seeing the joy and benefits this has brought to their lives".**

Our key service systems

To successfully transform our services, we need to ensure that our systems are fit for purpose and match our service business processes, capturing the right data, in the right way, at the right time to achieve.

Our My Account platform is transforming to improve the single and connected user experience for our residents with complete transparency for cases raised with the council. When residents access the platform, they will have their own unique account view focusing on what they want and need, see updates to their cases, track the progress of cases as well as receive ongoing updates on the status of their requests.

One of the biggest benefits of our new online account is that it will be notifications driven, which means that a customer does not need to call or email us for updates on what is happening with their service request and allows all involved to receive real-time progress updates, which provides a richer, seamless, and hassle-free experience for our residents, removing the need to make phone calls to check on progress.

We are remodelling and improving our online service delivery offer. We want to allow residents access to more ways of self service, meaning they can make choices and engage with us on any device. The new platform gives more flexibility around future design, and we want engage with our residents and businesses as part of the future design, making sure we develop delivery processes and utilise their feedback which allow us to respond and improve the customer experience and journey, ensuring we delivery better outcomes for all.

We will also continue to work with our partners through the Healthier Wigan Partnership to join up and enhance our collective digital offer to residents. Our joint ambition is to bring our digital platforms together and provide a 'no wrong door approach' – so that residents can access key health and civic data, processes and services in the same way across all partners.
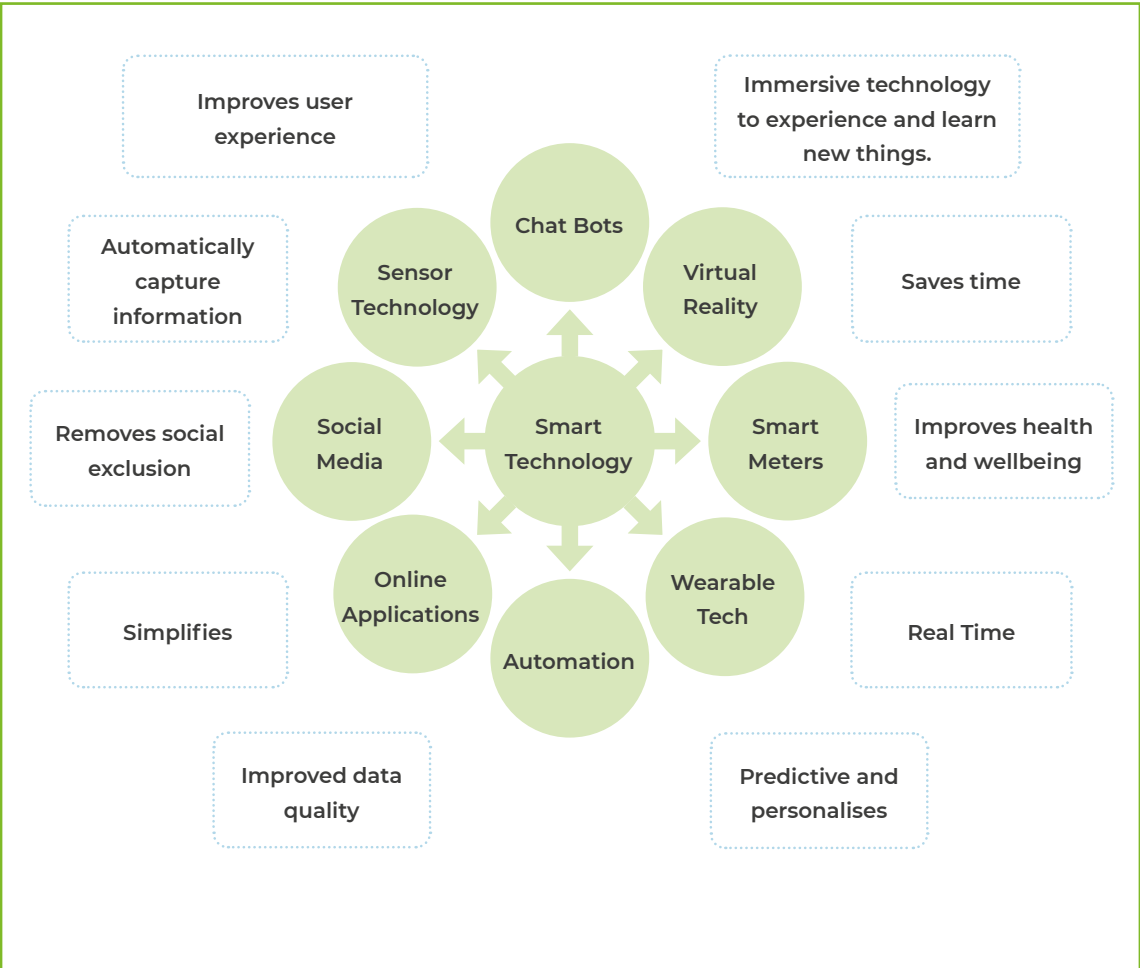
Innovation and Emerging Technology

Local Government continues to experience a very challenging financial environment and we have significant savings to make to continue to balance our budget. Digital Transformation offers a wide number of opportunities via technology to achieve some of these savings.

We are committed in finding Digital Solutions which;

• Save time and money!

• Provide meaningful change!

• Improve the customer and user experience!

• Provide a digital legacy which can be reused!

In 2021, we will begin our journey to become a hub for Greater Manchester Social Work Academy Centre of Excellence (GMSWA) for use of Digital Technology within Children's Social Care. The pandemic highlighted more than ever the vital importance of effective digital services and digital inclusion as well as importantly helping us to understand where technology needs to be in the background whilst skilled professionals do what they do best.

We want to leverage new emerging 'SMART' technologies as they enter the digital market and understand how they can support our vision to improve our delivery going forwards across all our services.

Improves user experience

Immersive technology to experience and learn new things.

Automatically capture information

Chat Bots

Sensor Technology

Virtual Reality

Saves time

Removes social exclusion

Social Media

Smart Technology

Smart Meters

Improves health and wellbeing

Simplifies

Online Applications

Automation

Wearable Tech

Real Time

Improved data quality

Predictive and personalises

What is SMART Technology?

As individuals we are probably using a lot of Smart Technology in our everyday lives. How many of us have Smart watches or devices at home, who we ask about the weather or to set reminders, or use our smart phones to do daily shopping as well as communicate with our families and friends?

Within the Council, we have started our journey to see how this type of technology can help us provide the best public service to you.

Our employees are and continue to be our greatest asset. But we do see significant value in the use of Artificial Intelligence and automation to enhance the skill and capacity of our workforce.

By adopting these technologies, where suitable, we can save time and eliminate repetitive tasks and processes. It will allow us to increase the speed and accuracy at which we complete work, and free up our high skilled teams time to focus on providing enhanced support to the service and delivery to our residents & families.

We will make positive health impacts to our residents' care, our People Powered Technology Team like within Adults Social Care who have already allowed us to see the benefits of existing consumer technology.

At Heathside, our council-owned care home in Leigh, we have residents living with dementia. They were able to experience the virtual world when Leigh Centurions Rugby Club provided virtual reality headsets. The residents thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and were able to safari in Africa, ride in hot air balloons, swim under the ocean and fly aeroplanes.

By using sensors in the place we can find out more about where we live and help to shape and redesign our neighbourhoods & homes.

Gathering intelligence around our economy and environment, such as how busy the roads are, the air quality, areas of traffic congestion or how busy areas of the borough are by measuring pedestrian footfall, can help us to move towards a predictive design approach. We can use this information to make improvements that change and impact in the right way.

Imagine being able to predict potholes in roads before they happen or know how long the queue is for the tip – this type of knowledge would allow us to make better informed decisions around how we best spend our money where, only delivering things as and when needed – with easier and more sustainable ways of obtaining the insight.

Already our Highways teams have placed drainage sensor technology out in the field to test and find out the benefits. The sensors capture real time data and intelligence. We are expecting this to help us to understand the condition of drains and if they are damaged earlier than planned manual inspections may reveal.

Another of our key aims is to understand if this additional intelligence can help us predict and limit flooding in areas. We are hoping over the next 12 months that we will know if we can adopt these in a wider area.

Together We Will:

Key Pledges	Timeline
Rollout our improved My Account offer for residents providing a single digital platform to transact, get help and support and report issues to the council.	2021-22
Formalise a SMART Technology delivery plan which invests in SMART solutions as deployable tools within all services. Apply digital solutions which improve accuracy, increase efficiency, remove repetitive tasks and support data processing to free up resources and support service delivery.	2021-2022
Leverage existing systems to maximise our existing usage of them where we can make sure we are working and adopting best practice.	2023
Continue to invest in Open Data Wigan to increase the number of open datasets for residents and businesses, making data accessible for our residents and communities.	By 2025
Build on our existing People Powered Technology programme and identify scalable opportunities across the Council and our Healthy Wigan Partnership, which will actively improve service delivery, resident's wellbeing, improve our neighbourhoods as well as contribution to making efficiency savings.	2025
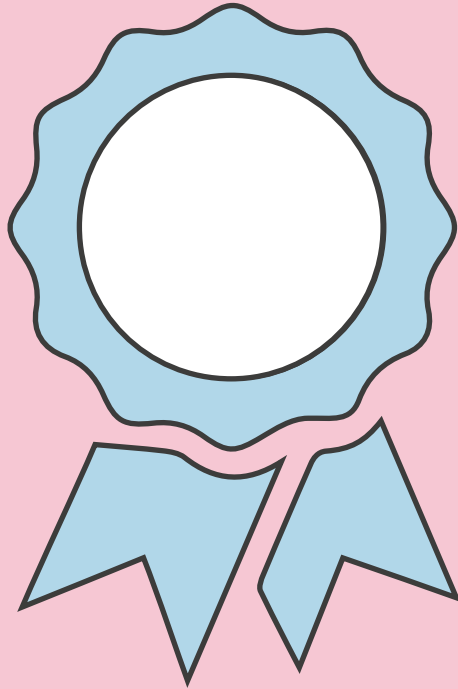
**Digital three:
Fully Digitally
enabled**

The best digital strategy and services in the world will be of no use to our residents and businesses unless they have the means, confidence and skills to access them and get best value from them. Digital inclusion has long been a key focus for us, but our experiences during the pandemic shone a light on just how fundamental and critical it is. It highlighted that not everyone has accessible, affordable and equitable access to the digital world.

Our digital strategy will strongly focus on digital inclusion and skills, innovation for businesses and employment opportunities linked to digital neighbourhoods working with many partners and stakeholders as part of our Deal commitments. We will ensure that our public services continue to transform by offering services and volunteering opportunities through projects like #TechMates and that all our residents and businesses can benefit from the transformative potential of digital. We will creating a framework of support for local organisations to collaborate, share best practice and shape a robust digital inclusion offer for residents.

When our residents experienced lockdown, digital was THE only way to maintain contact with loved ones, continue in education, work and get essential goods such as food. Those without the digital tools and skills to do that were adversely affected in a significant way.

However, part of our learning during lockdown, was that more and more people have embraced the benefits of digital engagement. Over the next 12 months we want to further improve the way we engage with our residents and introduce a new engagement platform. Through this, we can hear from people like never before and can target by geographic location, interest groups, sectors, ages and more.

We want our residents to have more channels of engagement and allow them to share their feelings, ideas and thoughts around changing the place and influencing the direction we should take, as well as creating connections within our own communities to remove some of the experienced isolation.

To do this we continue to build upon our Deal principles to deepen further our relationship with the people of the borough.

Digital Communities Partnership

Our new Digital Strategy will be a key driver in identifying and supporting the delivery of projects and wider initiatives, and how we can generate more positive and engaging ways of involving people, businesses and the wider community in articulating new visions, strategies and practices that stress accessibility, diversity and key principles which contribute to economic recovery.

This new Digital Communities Partnership gives our community partners, voluntary and social enterprise sector opportunities to tackle digital exclusion together through the sharing of their knowledge, working collaboratively, and developing digital strategies to create better ways of reaching communities that remain digitally excluded.

We will focus our joint efforts on providing access to devices, connectivity and digital skills for those in greatest need. The digital investment narrative has become even more pertinent considering the exacerbation of digital inequalities brought about by the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

The economic prospects and wellbeing of our residents are under threat from the societal challenges of mass unemployment and social isolation. National lockdowns have created an environment where citizens feel disconnected from everyday life, unable to socialise. Moreover, lockdowns prevent everyone from supporting local businesses through participation in the local economy.

Our Libraries are at the forefront of digital support for our residents, they offer a free safe space in the heart of our digital neighbourhoods to help residents learn, grow and discover their digital potential and ambitions and will be so important in meeting these challenges as we build an inclusive economic recovery.

Devices and Connectivity

The council always puts our customers at the heart of everything we do, and we view the digital agenda as a solution to improving the lives of residents. Successful digital transformation is centred around the people, what our residents and staff want. Technology can then be wrapped around them to ensure they have the right solution for what we want to achieve.

Over **1,000** devices distributed to students.

Devices to support The Deal for Foster Carers in Wigan Council.

Over **200** tablets jointly distributed via our Healthy Wigan Partnership teams which supported residents in care and within health settings to keep in touch during Covid-19

Care Leavers provided with digital access as per the GM Care Leavers Covenant.

60% reduction in falls in Care Homes due to the introduction of wearable sensors.

50 devices provided for our most vulnerable residents along with #TechMates support.

70% reduction in intrusive night turns in Care Homes for residents wearing sensors.

85% of GP appointments caried out remotely, with most patient queries resolved with 1hr and **95%+** patient satisfaction.

During the pandemic, we witnessed excellent work and commitment to get as many devices as possible to those in need, but this wasn't enough to support every need and without the ability to afford the connectivity required to make use of the devices, in the long term it fell short.

Some of our Digital Community Partners have supported our residents and school aged children by lending devices and setting up donation schemes, and these community assets will continue to support residents moving forward.

Access to online learning will continue to be a vital component of every child and young person's education and we are determined to ensure everybody can access what is increasingly becoming a fundamental human right. We are working with our colleagues in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, with digital businesses and network providers to develop a package of support to make 100% digitally enabled a realistic ambition.

Our ambition is that we focus on ensuring that every resident and business in our borough has the kit and connectivity along with the skills and confidence to thrive in a digital world. We are fully committed to seeking out partnerships and organisations who will work with us to create resolutions and ways forward in which we address the

digital poverty challenges we face in the borough. We are confident that with right network and partnership, we will find a way to provide access to subsidised or free broadband options for children who are eligible for free school meals and enable all council homes to be digitally connected.

We continue to invest in our network of public use computers which are available and free to access in our community libraries. We will expand this offer to include the ability to loan devices and data from our library network and community partners so that digital access is opened to more and more of our residents. This will be offered alongside support from our #TechMates programme. Provision and accessibility to devices will not only strengthen the way in which we can provide our services differently, it also reduces the need for paper files and diaries making it better for the environment too. Our Deal for Foster Carers in Wigan is committed to digitising and making this happen.

We know digital poverty prevents young people from accessing support, maintaining contact with friends, family and professionals and sets them apart from their peers in society. Our care leavers aged 16 - 25 have found it difficult to engage in virtual activities provided during the pandemic and couldn't access training, education or employment online. Access to digital services is a priority for our care leavers as per the GM Care Leavers Covenant

Our residents have also told us that growing older in their own home was really important to them, so we will continue to invest in cutting-edge assistive technology which can support them to do this.

We have tested and demonstrated how this type of innovation can change lives in our

Smart Bungalow. By filling a vacant property in the borough with assistive technology, we have transformed the health and social care sector. From voice-activated systems that can be customised to help those in supported housing, mobilisation equipment to help residents live independently when they otherwise may not have been able to, through to cutting-edge devices to help residents with visual impairments carry out everyday tasks, such as making a brew.

In the future we want to increase the use of digital technology in care homes to ensure the continuation of virtual wards, provider training and greater connections with family and friends. We want to provide a clear digital offer within adult social care and health that helps in hospital discharge, reablement, supported living and wider social care needs. We will work with homecare providers to use technology wider for medication management and reduce social isolation. We will support day care providers / CIC to provide a digital offer that ensures a hybrid offer of face-to-face support and digital offer for people with disabilities.

We experienced a rapid adoption of digital technology during 2020 and we want to build upon that momentum. We will use the power of technology to improve access to health improvement services, by making advice and support available to suit the needs of our residents. We will develop digital solutions to encourage healthy lifestyles, manage long-term health conditions and reduce the future demands on health and social care.

Case Study – iPads at Lime House Care Home

With social distancing measures in place and non-essential visits from friends and family temporarily stopped, digital devices have become a lifeline to ensure residents in Wigan Borough could stay connected with their loved ones and receive vital health support throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic, our Healthy Wigan Partnership, (which includes Wigan Council, WWL NHS Foundation Trust and Wigan CCG) distributed 100 tablets across each of the 54 care homes in the Wigan Borough. Lime House Care Home, based in Lowton, were just one of the care homes who have been involved in the iPad donation scheme and benefitted from the provision.

Kath Hurst, Lime House Care Home manager, said: **"The donated iPads have been a fantastic tool for us during the last few months."**

"It has allowed us to virtual ward rounds with the GP so they can actually see the residents and give them the best treatment and care that they need."

"They have also been used for the staff to access training and to have conversations with residents' families and friends" she added.

The distributed ipads also meant that 100-year-old resident Bertha could celebrate her special birthday. Bertha's family and friends from across the world were able to celebrate with her via Zoom and watch as she blew candles out on her cake, opened presents and her card from the Queen.

Kath said: **"The feedback from the family was that it allowed them all to be together as a family when otherwise they wouldn't have been able to. It has led them then to keep in touch via Zoom."**

"It has helped other people too, and that is what it is all about- keeping people connected during these difficult times."

Now, Kath and the team at Lime House are looking at future planning and utilising the iPads in innovative ways to continue to support and provide the best possible service to residents and their families.

Together We Will:

| Key Pledges	Timeline
Implement a device and data loaning scheme across our library network and community partners.	2021
Develop a digital package of support for access to devices and connectivity for our most vulnerable residents so that they can stay at home longer.	2021-2022
Upskill and train– Create accredited #TechMate volunteers training pathway (AQA) and upskill/train 500 graduates.	By early 2023
Support development and access to resources for our Digital Community Partnership to provide new training and skills opportunities to our residents & communities with the digital skills they need in life.	By 2023
Increase usage of digital tools in care homes to ensure the continuation of virtual wards, provider training and greater connection with family and friends.	By 2025
Develop a digital Health Improvement offer supporting primary illness prevention activity (including stop smoking and weight management) and also secondary prevention supporting residents to manage long-term conditions. Digitally developing and expanding the traditional support to better reflect the way our residents routinely engage with technology.	By 2025
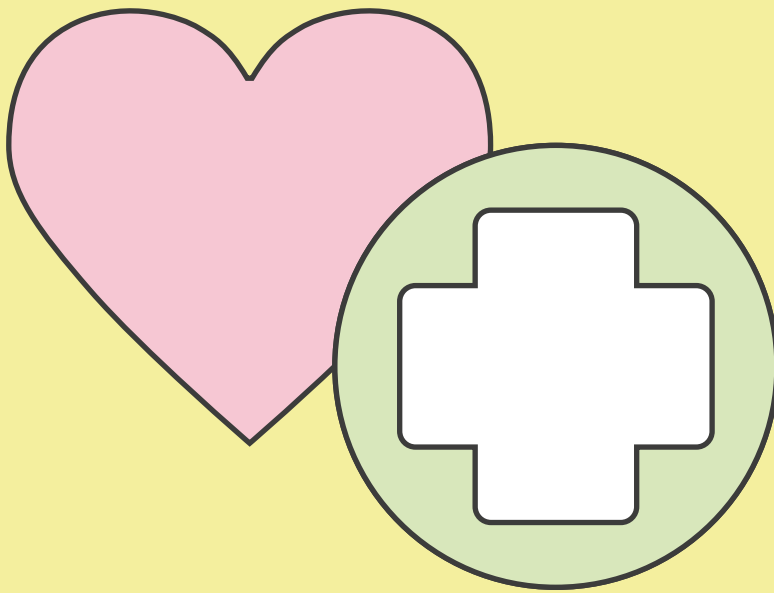
Digital four:
Transforming the places we live and work and promoting community wealth and health.

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.
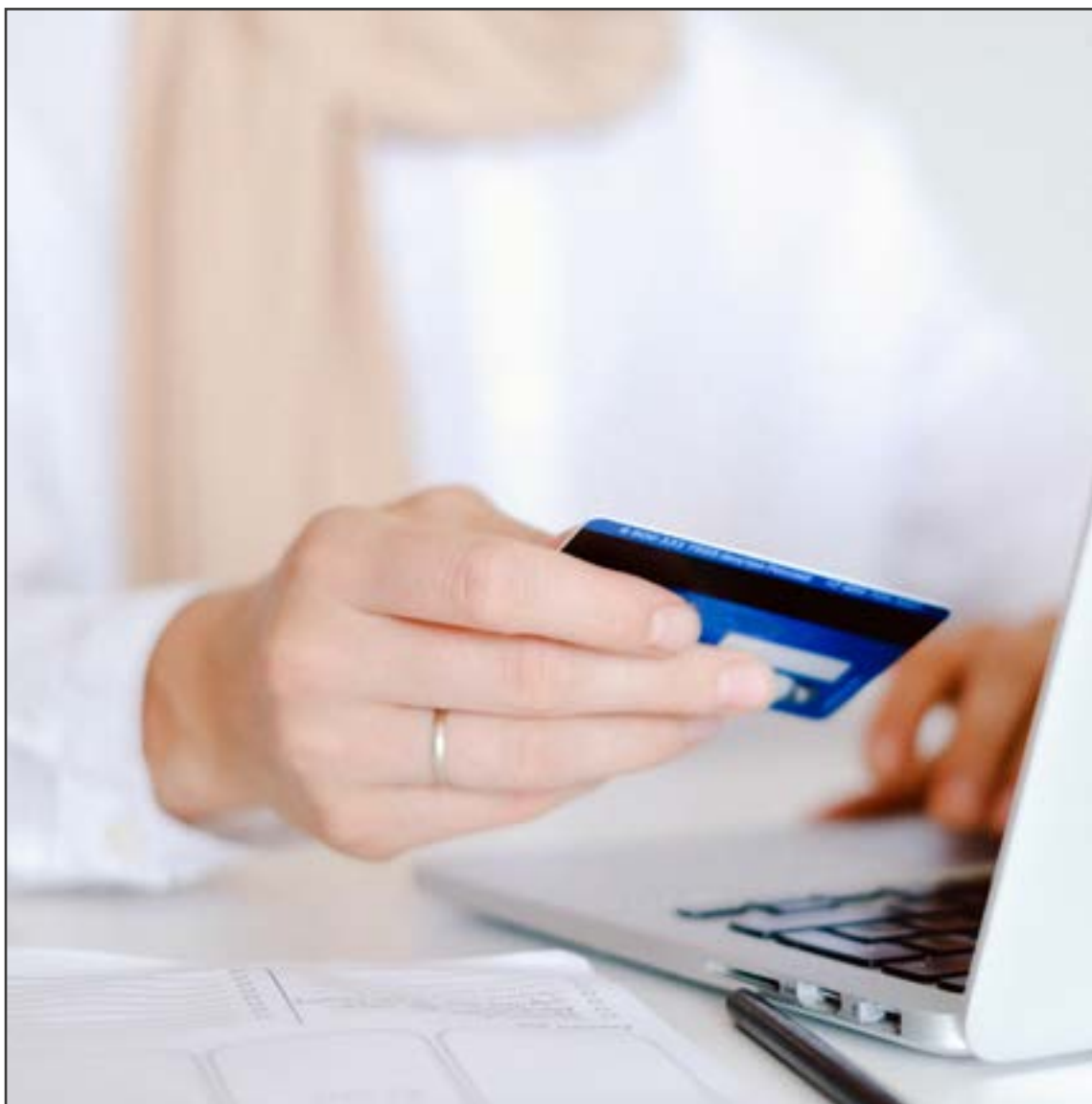
Growing Digital Talent & Skills

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.

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

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
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.	2021-22
Enable the creation of Innovation/Entrepreneurial Hubs across the borough, which support and encourage – · **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
Provide more public opportunity for digital engagement and immersive experiences to set the scene for the future of our borough via economic regeneration & growth.	2022- 2023
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.	By 2024
Support the GM wide LFFN delivery for ultra-fast broadband.	By 2025
Develop the digital offer to support hospital discharge, reablement, supported living and wider social care needs, working with partners to use technology.	By 2025
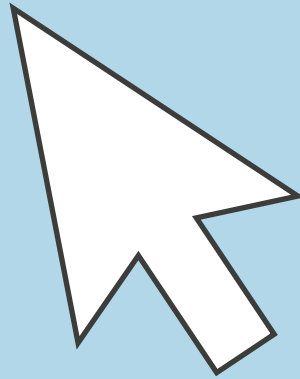
Key Principles

Key Principles

Delivery of this digital strategy is overseen by the Wigan Council Digital Board which is chaired by Cllr Nazia Rehman, Cabinet Member for Resources, Finance and Transformation.

The Board is attended by James Winterbottom, Director - Digital, Leisure and Wellbeing and other members of the Council's Senior Management Team.

The Board provided strategic leadership, engage with elected members, council officers and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement this new and ambitious Digital Strategy for the borough.

- We will recognise the power digital has to improve the potential and growth of the borough and to transform the way we deliver services.

- We will ensure our services are accessible to everyone and will engage with residents, businesses and partners to ensure they have the digital access they require.

- We will promote the workplace of 2030 and invest in our staff, so they have the digital resources, skills and confidence they need to thrive.

- We will maximise the opportunities presented by digital technology to transform our public services whilst ensuring secure and modern information governance and data sharing arrangements.

Our People   **Our Place**   **Our Future**