Trafford Council Digital Strategy 2025-28

1. Foreword

The progress of the digital world has been extraordinary. In 1980, Bill Gates famously envisioned a computer on every desk and in every home.

Fast forward to today and now most of us – not just in our home but in our pocket – have digital devices more powerful than the computers that helped send humans to the moon.

With that easy access to Digital, comes an expectation from residents and businesses that they can interact with the Council quickly, easily and at a time of their choosing. That is why this strategy will make sure our digital services are user-friendly, easy to find and efficient. They will also be robust and reliable too, so that people can have confidence in our services, even – and especially – in an emergency.

Most people now have access to smart phones and computers. But not everyone. There are still many people who do not have access due to a disability, poverty or a lack of digital skills. This strategy outlines how we support residents to improve their skills and confidence, give access to digital devices and support for those in need, and make sure our digital content is clearly written and accessible to all. At the same time, more traditional services will still be available for those that can't access digital services, or choose not to, so that everyone can access the services they need regardless of their circumstances.

Fundamental to all of this is a workforce comfortable with the latest advances in digital technology. We will therefore support employees to maximise the potential of digital tools and foster a culture of continuous learning. The Council's budget is constrained but we can make use of digital advances to improve productivity and enable us to do more with less.

Already, we have done much to improve our digital offering. This strategy builds on our successes to make sure that Trafford is a borough where all our residents, businesses, and communities thrive.

Paul James, Chief Digital Officer   *Cllr Tom Ross, Leader of Trafford Council*

2. The difference we can make – Trafford's digital profile

2.1. Trafford has a well-established digital profile that reflects its diverse and dynamic population, alongside the region's increasing digital connectivity and economic landscape. Trafford is home to a mix of affluent suburban areas, thriving town centres, and a wide range of local businesses and community groups, all of which contribute to its digital identity.

2.2. Despite positive developments in digital use and connectivity in recent years, there are still some challenges to overcome in Trafford's digital landscape. While many parts of the borough have good digital infrastructure, some areas - especially in the most rural wards - experience gaps in connectivity and slower broadband speeds. The digital divide remains a key issue, with older generations or lower-income residents sometimes facing barriers to full digital participation.

2.3. We know that digital exclusion can be a barrier to accessing Council services and opportunities that are only accessible, or more easily accessible, online. The Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) created by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) expresses the risk or "likelihood" of digital exclusion by area (Lower Super Output Area - LSOA) compared to other areas, nationally or within a local authority, using a score.

2.4. The DERI score is based on the combination of 11 indicators related to 3 topics: Broadband, Demography and Deprivation, covering risk factors such as broadband connectivity, older age, disability, deprivation, poverty, and skills levels that are considered to influence digital exclusion.

2.5. In Trafford, certain wards, such as Bucklow-St Martins and Bowdon in the south, and Clifford and Longford in the north, are at higher risk of digital exclusion. It is crucial that we take proactive steps to address the barriers to digital access that residents, communities, and colleagues face in their everyday lives.
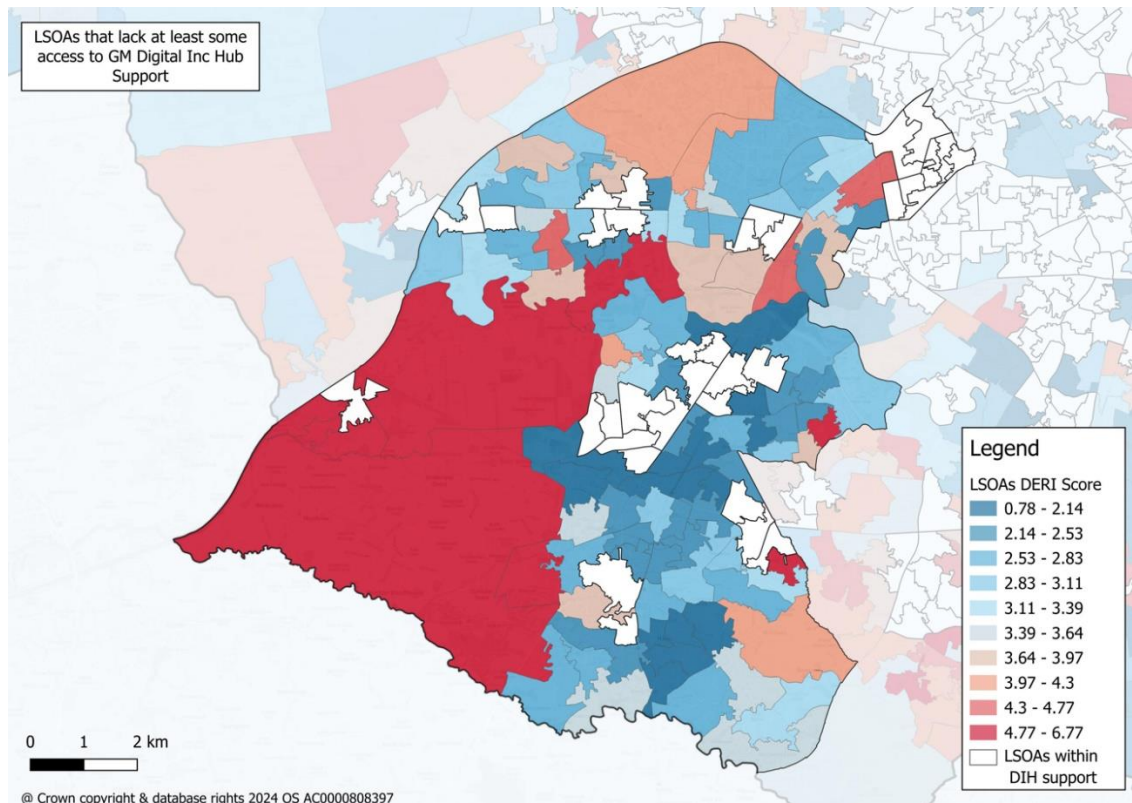
Digital Exclusion Risk Index for Trafford, December 2024

2.6. **Digital Profile: Arthur's Story**

86-year-old Arthur Payne from Sale joins Trafford Council's Go Digital classes – open to everyone - at Coppice Library every week.

This support has helped the ex-soldier, who served in Malaysia during the 1950s, to get online for the first time in his life, learning skills that enable him to shop on Amazon and contact friends via email.

In Arthur's words: "I didn't really have any digital skills before I joined the class. I wasn't sure how to get online properly and how to surf the internet.

"But, thanks to Bethany, who runs the class, I am now able to go online and shop on Amazon – which is fantastic. I can also send emails to friends as well."

3. Strategic Context

3.1. Trafford Council's Corporate Plan describes the strategic vision, priorities, and expected outcomes for the borough, the Council, and Trafford's health and care partners. Digital performs an important role in supporting the Council and partners to deliver the vision and priorities for the borough. Digital enables the workforce and council services to operate more efficiently and to better meet the needs of Trafford residents, communities, and businesses.
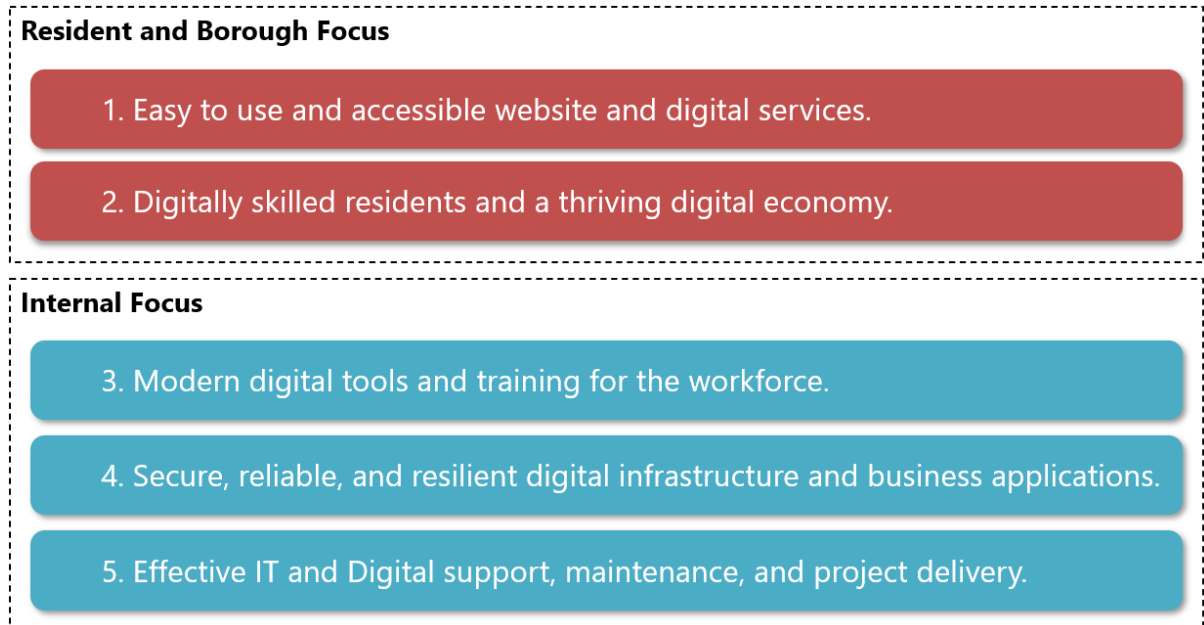
3.2. Trafford has developed an updated Digital Strategy for 2025-28 which reflects the refreshed Corporate Plan and priorities. The updated Digital Strategy also builds on the excellent foundational work delivered through the 2020-23 Digital Strategy and explores the potential of digital innovation to support service modernisation and improvement. The ambitions set out in the Council's Digital Strategy and Delivery Plan will be an important contributor in achieving Trafford's Corporate Plan.

3.3. Trafford's Digital Strategy has been developed, and will be delivered, in alignment with other locality, regional, or national strategies.

- At a locality level, Trafford Council works closely with health and care partners in the borough through the Trafford Integrated Care Partnership. This brings together colleagues to design and deliver Trafford's ambitions for better lives for our most vulnerable people; better wellbeing for our population; and better connections across our communities. The Locality Plan forms the strategic blueprint for transforming health and social care services in Trafford.

- At a regional level Trafford is one of ten Greater Manchester boroughs that work collaboratively with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to standardise and align where practical. The Greater Manchester Digital Blueprint is the strategic plan that sets out how Greater Manchester will transform into a leading digital city-region. The Greater Manchester Health and Care Digital Transformation Strategy aims to revolutionise health and care services in the region through digital, data, and technology.

- Nationally, the Government Digital Service (GDS) Principles are a set of guidelines designed to help create effective, user-centred digital services. The principles form the basis of Trafford Council's improvements to online services. The Local Digital Collaborative is an initiative by the UK Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) aimed at supporting local councils to deliver better public services through digital transformation. The initiative is underpinned by the Local Digital Declaration which Trafford signed in 2020.

4. Trafford's 2025-28 Digital Vision and Priorities

"Enabling the people, businesses, and communities of Trafford to unlock their full digital potential".

Resident and Borough Focus

1. Easy to use and accessible website and digital services.

2. Digitally skilled residents and a thriving digital economy.

Internal Focus

3. Modern digital tools and training for the workforce.

4. Secure, reliable, and resilient digital infrastructure and business applications.

5. Effective IT and Digital support, maintenance, and project delivery.

IT and Digital Service's Mission Statement: **A key enabler that empowers and support the delivery of digital services**.

5. Trafford's Digital Target Operating Model

5.1. Trafford will continue to deliver and embed the Digital Target Operating Model (TOM), which is designed around three tiers of support for the residents and businesses of Trafford, along with improvements to internal operations and corporate support functions. The aim is to move services, support, and transactions to lower cost delivery models where appropriate, without compromising on the user experience.

5.2. Not all people will be able to access digital services for a variety of reasons; and not all services can be delivered digitally. However, increasing the range and use of digital services releases council resources to support more complex needs through non-digital channels. It is also recognised that an increased uptake of digital services will only be achieved and sustained by improving the user experience. We provide four tiers of support under the Digital Target Operating Model (TOM):

5.3. **Website (Tier One Digital Support)** - The Council website is well-designed, easy to use, and provides the information people need to access. The content

must be regularly updated and written in a way that is accessible and understandable to all.

5.4. **Digital Transactional Services (Tier Two Digital Support)** - Consists of well-designed online transactional services that are easy to find and use. Services should be fully automated, requiring no manual input where possible.

5.5. **Digital Systems and Processes (Tier Three Digital Support)** - Involves digitally modernising internal council systems and processes. Business applications will be updated, enhanced, or replaced to better support the delivery of services and to ensure the Council's data is secure.

5.6. **IT Infrastructure and Support (Digital Foundations)** - The Council's corporate and support functions will be digitally transformed to enable the organisation to operate efficiently. The workforce will be provided with modern, appropriate digital tools and trained to use them. Secure and reliable infrastructure, with the capacity to support future needs, completes the digital foundations.
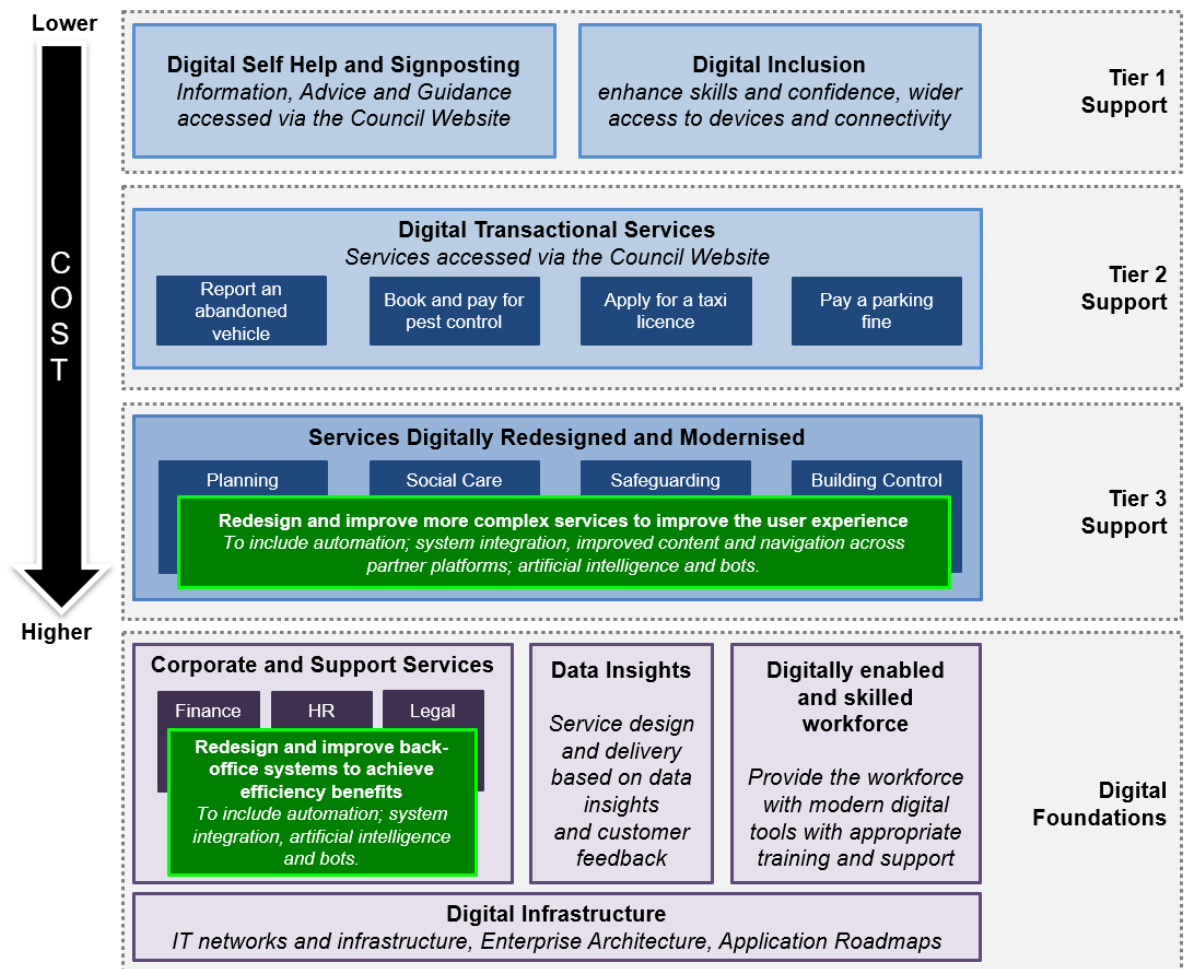
6. Innovation and service improvement

6.1. Trafford Council will accelerate digital innovation opportunities through the 2025-28 strategy by identifying and addressing specific business challenges and service improvement opportunities. Trafford has already delivered several solutions on the Microsoft Power Platform during 2023 and is now looking to increase the scope, complexity, and subsequent benefits of the business opportunities progressed. More will be done with robotics process automation and exploring the potential of other tools the Council has invested in.

6.2. The 2024 Trafford CIPFA Review included the recommendation to 'balance ambition against pressures, and doing fewer things well'. While emerging technology opportunities will be explored, the primary focus for 2025 will be to advance the significant foundational improvements already identified. More work on data governance and controls is needed before Artificial Intelligence could be used more widely by Trafford Council.

6.3. Most of the Council's online services and content require improvement. Trafford's current website falls short of expectations, often leading residents to resort to traditional methods or abandon their online search without finding what they need. During 2025, priority will be given to delivering substantial improvements to the website, online services, and internal processes, rather than further investment in new digital technologies. Enhanced digital services will be available to the public through the Council's relaunched website, expected in summer 2025.

6.4. Digital skills and training are often overlooked when implementing new digital solutions, but this is a critical element of ensuring the investment in technology delivers the expected productivity improvements. To address this, the Digital Strategy will include the resourcing of an effective Digital Training and Adoption function, ensuring the workforce has the skills and awareness to fully utilise new and updated tools.

6.5. Trafford developed a set of digital design principles to guide the redesign of services. These were adapted from the Government Digital Service design principles and other examples of best practice. Trafford signed the Local Digital Declaration in 2020 and work to the key principles covered by the declaration. At the core of Trafford's digital design principles is the aim to design services based around the users' needs and for the services to be consistent and accessible for all.

7. Digital Enterprise Architecture (EA)

7.1. In 2023, Trafford Council introduced a Digital Enterprise Architecture approach to provide a comprehensive organisational view of the Council's digital infrastructure, data, and business solutions. Roadmaps for the Council's business applications and IT infrastructure have been captured in detail, which surfaces additional opportunities to digitally transform council services and enables a proactive approach to planning upgrades and replacements. It also provides the platform for improved contract management and ensuring Trafford's supply chain has appropriate cyber security controls in place. The target architecture for 2027 has been considered during the development of this strategy and the planned activities to reach the agreed target architecture form the basis of Trafford Council's delivery plans for 2024-28. The principles are used to assess the viability of digital opportunities and help shape the approach used to deliver approved proposals.

8. Digitally Ambitious - 'We will' Statements

8.1. There is much to do over the next four years, with the commitments under each of these digital priorities needing to be delivered due to business priorities, existing digital solutions at their end of life, or necessary improvements to how the IT & Digital Service operates.

8.2. **Easy to use and accessible website and digital services.**

Trafford's residents and businesses want to engage with the Council through digital channels but expect a high-quality experience. People will abandon these channels or choose alternatives if the experience is poor or if they cannot find what they need. The move to Digital can help the Council achieve efficiencies while improving the customer experience. It also allows the Council to redirect resources to support those who are most in need and require more complex, direct support.

We will:

   a) Enhance the Council website and online services by ensuring they are user-friendly and designed around the residents' experience by implementing the Local Gov Drupal content management system and Microsoft Dynamics Customer Relationship Management solution.
   b) Innovate where possible, leveraging digital technologies to provide efficient and effective services to our residents by delivering a comprehensive range of digital solutions and solving business challenges via the Council's Digital Innovation Hub.

c) Ensure all content on the website and digital platforms is clearly written, accessible and easy to find by training and supporting the web content authors to use the Council's web content principles and style guides.

d) Regularly review and update our website based on feedback from residents by implementing a range of resident feedback routes and incorporating recommendations into Trafford's online services.

8.3. **Digitally skilled residents and a thriving digital economy.**

Digital technology is becoming an increasingly important part of people's lives and how businesses operate. Therefore, enabling our residents to access digital services and develop the skills to engage with the digital world is a key focus. The Council will also collaborate with industry to enhance the borough's digital infrastructure and economy.

We will:

a) Empower Trafford residents and communities to improve their skills and confidence, particularly among those who are digitally excluded by delivering targeted digital inclusion and skills initiatives, and signposting to online support.

b) Enable access to digital devices and support for those in need via Community Hubs within libraries and community centres by maintaining the Trafford Digital Hubs model and growing the Tech4All initiative.

c) Engage with communities to understand their digital needs and aspirations, providing support or guidance where needed by running residents digital engagement and feedback sessions in libraries and Community Hubs.

d) Collaborate with businesses and industry to promote digital engagement, helping them to leverage digital tools to grow and thrive, by raising awareness of the analogue telephone lines (PSTN) switch off and working with industry to support Trafford residents.

8.4. **Modern digital tools and training for the workforce**.

Digital tools and digital ways of working allow employees to maximise their potential and work more efficiently. The Council delivered new tools to the workforce in 2023 and will continue to implement all the available features as these tools evolve. Support with adoption and changes to business processes is the focus for 2025 to fully maximise the Council's investment. Further work will be done on automating mundane and repetitive tasks to free employees' time so they can focus on more valuable and productive work.

We will:

a) Equip our employees with modern digital tools that enable them to work more productively by implementing new solutions such as SharePoint and Exchange Online; and provide well-equipped laptops.

b) Support our employees to maximise the potential of digital tools through training, adoption support and business change initiatives; and foster a culture of continuous learning by maintaining a Digital Champions network, offering an online learning platform, and enabling self-help resources through Microsoft Viva Engage.

c) Provide flexible working environments supported by robust digital infrastructure, allowing our employees to work remotely and maintain a healthy work-life balance, by equipping desks, meeting rooms, and home workspaces with the necessary tools and technology.

8.5. **Secure, reliable, and resilient digital infrastructure and business applications.**

Technology underpins most Council services and is becoming increasingly complex, requiring a more coordinated approach to management and support. Investments in technology must be carefully planned to incorporate service modernisation and address the changing needs of residents. Technical solutions and business application roadmaps, guided by an Enterprise Architecture approach, along with effective contract and supplier management, ensure the Council can effectively manage its digital estate.

We will:

a) Plan and maintain secure, reliable and resilient digital infrastructure to minimise service disruptions by upgrading the Council's data network, implementing the new Unified Communications platform, and progressing the Cloud Migration Strategy.

b) Maintain robust cyber security processes and capabilities to protect the Council's digital infrastructure, applications, and supply chain, while providing an effective response to potential threats by delivering the Cyber Security Improvement Plan and implementing a new IT Disaster Recovery Solution.

c) Plan and manage the Council's business applications to ensure they remain secure, fit for purpose, and up to date, while optimising existing capabilities by developing, maintaining, and delivering the Council's Business Application Roadmap.

8.6. **Effective IT & Digital support, maintenance, and project delivery.**

The IT & Digital Service is the primary delivery function for Trafford Council, responsible for managing, supporting, and maintaining most IT solutions and infrastructure used across the organisation. Significant improvements have been
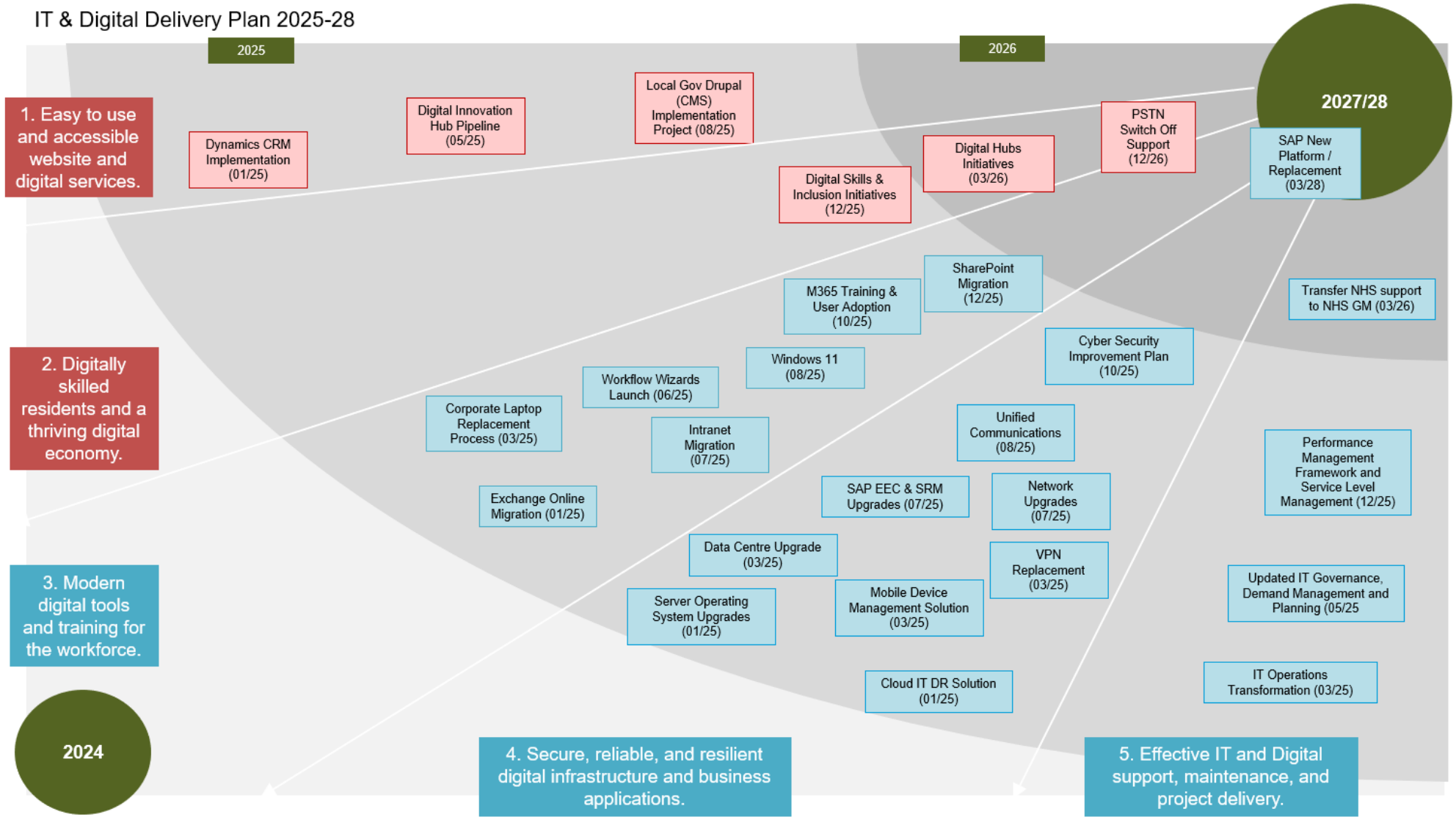
made in recent years, including the launch of the IT Hub and enhancements to IT processes and policies. Further improvements are planned to strengthen service provision, optimise processes, and enhance governance.

We will:

a) Establish effective processes for IT support and maintenance, ensuring that systems are up to date, functioning optimally, and meet the needs of the business by transforming the IT Operations teams, improving processes and enhancing services provided via the IT Hub.

b) Deliver approved IT and digital projects on time and within budget to ensure successful outcomes by strengthening IT & Digital governance and planning processes.

c) Use data-driven insights to drive continuous improvement and monitor performance and costs by implementing a Performance Management Framework and a business model for traded services.

d) Innovate and enhance our IT and digital support capabilities by researching emerging technologies and exploring use case-focused opportunities.

9. Digital Strategy Roadmap

IT & Digital Delivery Plan 2025-28

2025

2026

2027/28

2024

1. Easy to use and accessible website and digital services.

2. Digitally skilled residents and a thriving digital economy.

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Dynamics CRM Implementation (01/25)

Digital Innovation Hub Pipeline (05/25)

Local Gov Drupal (CMS) Implementation Project (08/25)

Digital Skills & Inclusion Initiatives (12/25)

Digital Hubs Initiatives (03/26)

PSTN Switch Off Support (12/26)

SAP New Platform / Replacement (03/28)

Transfer NHS support to NHS GM (03/26)

SharePoint Migration (12/25)

M365 Training & User Adoption (10/25)

Cyber Security Improvement Plan (10/25)

Windows 11 (08/25)

Workflow Wizards Launch (06/25)

Corporate Laptop Replacement Process (03/25)

Intranet Migration (07/25)

Unified Communications (08/25)

Performance Management Framework and Service Level Management (12/25)

Exchange Online Migration (01/25)

SAP EEC & SRM Upgrades (07/25)

Network Upgrades (07/25)

Data Centre Upgrade (03/25)

VPN Replacement (03/25)

Updated IT Governance, Demand Management and Planning (05/25

Server Operating System Upgrades (01/25)

Mobile Device Management Solution (03/25)

IT Operations Transformation (03/25)

Cloud IT DR Solution (01/25)

10. Appendix 1 - Spotlight on Trafford's 2020-23 Digital Strategy

Tech4All and other Digital Inclusion Initiatives (Digital Borough)

Trafford Council's digital inclusion initiative, Trafford Tech4All, has made significant strides in addressing digital exclusion across the borough. Tech4All has provided hundreds of residents with essential digital tools and skills, ensuring that more people can participate in the modern world. 265 laptops were distributed to families in need at pop-up shops in Old Trafford, Partington, Lostock, Altrincham, and Sale. Devices donated by Trafford's Housing Association (L&Q), and Royal Mail were refurbished by Community Computers and sold at a subsidised price of £60. Over 350 free O2 SIM cards with 25GB of monthly data were provided to residents through the National Databank, ensuring connectivity for those struggling to stay online.

Trafford Tech4All is not only addressing digital exclusion but also promoting environmental sustainability. By refurbishing and repurposing corporate e-waste, the initiative has saved an estimated 192,010 kilograms of carbon and 3,495 kilograms of landfill. This environmentally friendly approach ensures that technology reaches those who need it most while reducing waste.

Trafford Council partnered with Virgin Media O2 to offer affordable or free connectivity solutions. The collaboration included discounted broadband plans and expert advice on social broadband tariffs. The initiative also saw the creation of a refreshed IT suite at St John's Centre in Old Trafford, equipped with new devices donated by Virgin Media O2. This facility will host digital skills training and adult learning courses. The Go Digital classes, aimed at residents over 50, cover essential digital skills and help participants stay connected with loved ones and navigate the web safely.

Residents have directly benefited from these initiatives. One resident was able to continue her software training course and support her daughter's education, while another used her laptop to re-enter the job market after a period of personal caring commitments. A father-of-two highlighted the transformative impact of the initiative, enabling his daughters to complete their homework and stay connected with friends. A regular attendee of the weekly digital inclusion class at Coppice Library in Sale, has learned to navigate online shopping and email communication.

Trafford Council has extended beyond device distribution and training. They have created an interactive map detailing digital support services across the borough, including Wi-Fi hotspots, computer access, and device lending schemes. This map is available on the Council's Digital Trafford webpages and provides residents with easy access to digital services and support.

Trafford Council's digital inclusion initiatives are a shining example of how local authorities and businesses can collaborate to tackle digital exclusion. By providing access to devices, connectivity, and digital skills training, the Council is ensuring that all residents can thrive in the digital age. The continued success of this initiative demonstrates the power of community-driven efforts to bring about lasting change.

Microsoft Power Platform Pipeline (Digital Services)

Trafford Council has made great strides in digital transformation during 2022-23. A skilled team was formed to provide the capacity and capability to deliver Trafford's digital ambitions. Opportunities for improvement were discussed with business stakeholders and a prioritised development pipeline was agreed with the Council's leadership. Trafford leveraged the Microsoft Power Platform and agile methodology to deliver on these opportunities. This approach has allowed for iterative design and rapid development, ensuring business value is achieved quickly.

A variety of applications were developed in-house during the first phase of transformation. One application was to support and streamline the review of recruitment business cases enabling a more efficient and effective recruitment process. Another, allowed residents to report abandoned vehicles which was integrated with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), enabling a seamless reporting and resolution process. A tool that maps and records the Council's property assets was developed to provide an accurate view of the council's properties, enabling better management and decision-making. The newly developed Commissioning Provider Quality Assurance application enables the Council to efficiently monitor and manage the quality of external social care providers. The application has streamlined time-consuming manual processes which improves accuracy and releases staff time to focus on proving care for those in need.

Each of these opportunities was assessed and prioritised using Trafford's digital benefits framework. The framework ensures that only the most beneficial and impactful opportunities are pursued, maximising the return on investment for the Council.

Looking ahead, the team is set to be relaunched in early 2025 with a broader remit and a wider pool of digital tools, which opens more opportunities for digital innovation and service transformation. The primary aim is to use modern digital tools and techniques to improve service delivery and improve residents' lives.

Cyber Security Improvement (Digital Organisation)

In the face of increasing cyber threats, Trafford Council has taken significant steps to bolster its cyber security posture. The risk and potential impact to Trafford Council is escalating due to a variety of factors, including increased sophistication of cyber criminals, and the growing reliance on IT and Digital systems for service delivery. Recognising these risks, Trafford Council built a dedicated cyber security team tasked with improving the council's defences. The team has made good progress with developing and implementing robust processes and policies designed to protect the council's digital assets. Progress has been achieved with access control, data protection, network security, and incident response.

Education plays a crucial role in Trafford Council's Cyber Security Strategy. The Council recognises that its employees are its first line of defence against cyber threats. To this end, it has invested in user education to raise awareness about cyber threats and to equip employees with the knowledge they need to identify and respond to these threats effectively. In October 2023, the council ran a successful Cyber Awareness Month. The initiative aimed to raise employees' awareness and knowledge of best practice approaches to cyber security.

Employees regularly learn about the importance of cyber security and how they can contribute to the council's cyber defence through a series of training sessions, communications, and test phishing e-mails. Performance is monitored and support is provided to individuals or teams where needed.

To further strengthen its cyber security, Trafford Council has procured new tools designed to improve the monitoring of its infrastructure and systems. These tools provide real-time visibility into the council's digital environment, enabling the cyber security team to detect and respond to potential threats more quickly. Response and recovery are other areas that are improving. The council has procedures in place to respond effectively to a cyber incident and mitigate the impact.

The work done on Trafford's cyber security posture during 2023 has helped the council to effectively manage the increased risk of cyber threats while maintaining secure and reliable services to its residents. While good progress has been achieved, Trafford is not complacent and cyber security improvements remain a key priority for the 2025-28 Digital Strategy and plans.