Digital, Data and Technology Strategy

Transforming Services for a Connected and Inclusive Oldham

2025 to 2030

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Oldham Council is committed to harnessing digital, technology, and data innovations to deliver exceptional, resident focused services whilst driving efficiency and sustainability. This strategy outlines a 5 year plan to transition from hybrid to full cloud infrastructure, integrate AI, Robotic Process Automation (RPA), AI agents, and broader automation tools. It aligns with central government priorities, including the UK Government's *Blueprint for Modern Digital Government* (January 2025) and the *Transforming for a Digital Future Roadmap* (2022-2025), which emphasise modernising public services through technology to enhance productivity and resident engagement.

1.2 Key enablers include collaborations with leading suppliers such as Microsoft for Azure cloud platforms and RPA solutions, alongside insights from consultancies like Gartner and Deloitte on the potential of AI and data analytics in the public sector. The strategy prioritises digital inclusion to ensure all residents benefit, addressing barriers through targeted programmes, and fosters partnerships with local businesses in Oldham and Greater Manchester to stimulate economic growth and innovation.

1.3 Expected outcomes include 20-30% efficiency gains, improved resident satisfaction, and reduced environmental impact, all whilst centring the resident focused experience and supporting local priorities.

2 Introduction and Context

2.1 The public sector faces increasing demands for efficient, accessible services amid budget constraints and technological advancements. Central government initiatives, such as the State of Digital Government Review (2025), underscore the need for updated systems, noting that outdated services hinder delivery. For Oldham, moving from hybrid to full cloud infrastructure, supported by our supplier Microsoft, will provide scalability and resilience, reducing costs and emissions in line with the Green and Growing mission.

2.2 AI, RPA, and automation, as recommended in the government's *AI Playbook for the UK Government* (2025), will streamline operations, freeing staff for high value tasks like community support. Consultancies such as PwC and Deloitte advocate for cloud enabled digital transformation to improve data driven decisions. This strategy places residents at the heart, emphasising digital inclusion to tackle device poverty and skills gaps, as per the Gov.UK *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* (2025), and leveraging local business partnerships via platforms like the Oldham Trading Platform to enhance community outcomes.

2.3 Challenges include legacy systems and digital divides, which will be addressed through phased implementation and inclusive programmes. By integrating these elements, we create a resilient framework that not only meets current needs but anticipates future demands, ensuring Oldham remains agile in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

3 Vision and Mission

3.1 **Vision:** A digitally empowered Oldham where technology enables inclusive, sustainable growth and outstanding resident services. We will be a leading smart borough in which digital technologies, data driven insights and intelligent infrastructure help residents, businesses and communities to thrive.

3.2 **Mission:** To harness digital, data and technology to transform how the Council operates, empower our workforce, and deliver simpler, faster and more inclusive services for residents. We will achieve this by building a modern cloud foundation, embedding responsible AI and automation, unifying our data, developing digital skills, and working in partnership with residents, businesses and Greater Manchester partners, always putting inclusion, security and sustainability at the centre of our approach.

3.3 This vision and mission reflect our commitment to innovation that serves the community first, drawing on best practices from government and industry experts to build a strategy that's uniquely Oldham's.

4 Guiding Principles

4.1 These principles guide the strategy, informed by central government and consultancy best practices:

4.1.1 **Resident Focused, Inclusive Design:** Prioritise resident needs with accessible services, ensuring digital inclusion for all, as emphasised in the Gov.UK *Digital Inclusion Action Plan* (2025).

4.1.2 **Data Driven Decisions**: Use data ethically as a strategic asset, following insights on governance from consultancies like Deloitte.

4.1.3 **Secure and Resilient:** Embed security in all initiatives, per the UK Blueprint's recommendations.

4.1.4 **Agile Innovation:** Adopt AI and automation responsibly, drawing from Gartner's expertise on emerging technology trends.

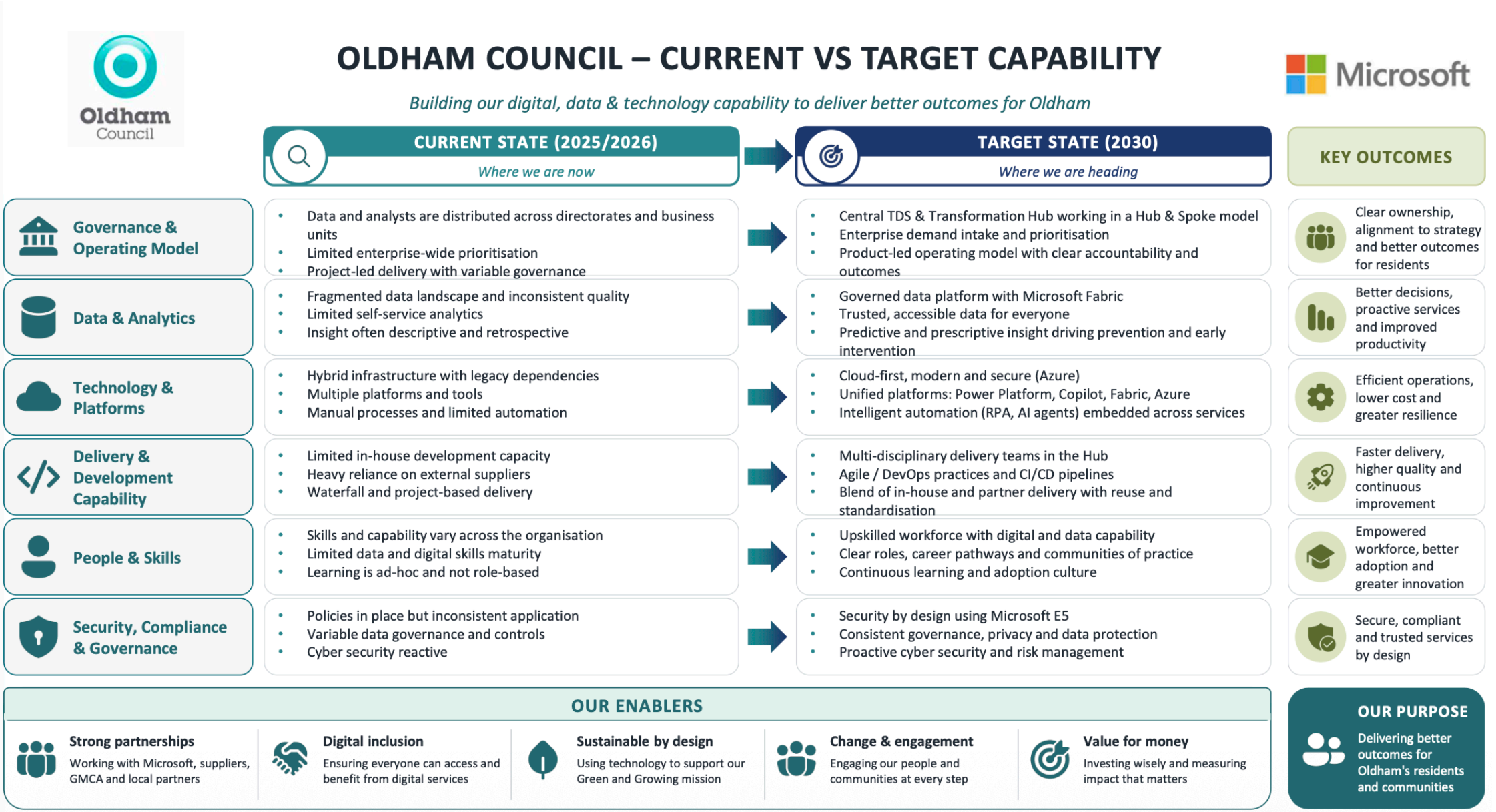
4.1.5 **Collaboration and Skills:** Partner with local businesses and build workforce capabilities through programmes like those supported by Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

4.1.6 **Sustainability:** Promote green technologies to support the Green and Growing mission.

4.2 These principles ensure every action we take is purposeful, balancing technological advancement with ethical and inclusive considerations.

4.3 To set out clearly the scale of the transformation required, Figure 1 shows Oldham Council's current digital, data and technology capability (2025/2026) against the target state we aim to reach by 2030. Developed in partnership with Microsoft, this assessment covers six critical domains: Governance & Operating Model, Data & Analytics, Technology & Platforms, Delivery & Development Capability, People & Skills, and Security, Compliance & Governance. It provides the baseline from which the six strategic pillars that follow have been designed.

Figure 1:


OLDHAM COUNCIL – CURRENT VS TARGET CAPABILITY
Building our digital, data & technology capability to deliver better outcomes for Oldham
Oldham Council
Microsoft
CURRENT STATE (2025/2026)
Where we are now
TARGET STATE (2030)
Where we are heading
KEY OUTCOMES
Governance & Operating Model
Data and analysts are distributed across directorates and business units
Limited enterprise-wide prioritisation
Project-led delivery with variable governance
Central TDS & Transformation Hub working in a Hub & Spoke model
Enterprise demand intake and prioritisation
Product-led operating model with clear accountability and outcomes
Clear ownership, alignment to strategy and better outcomes for residents
Data & Analytics
Fragmented data landscape and inconsistent quality
Limited self-service analytics
Insight often descriptive and retrospective
Governed data platform with Microsoft Fabric
Trusted, accessible data for everyone
Predictive and prescriptive insight driving prevention and early intervention
Better decisions, proactive services and improved productivity
Technology & Platforms
Hybrid infrastructure with legacy dependencies
Multiple platforms and tools
Manual processes and limited automation
Cloud-first, modern and secure (Azure)
Unified platforms: Power Platform, Copilot, Fabric, Azure
Intelligent automation (RPA, AI agents) embedded across services
Efficient operations, lower cost and greater resilience
Delivery & Development Capability
Limited in-house development capacity
Heavy reliance on external suppliers
Waterfall and project-based delivery
Multi-disciplinary delivery teams in the Hub
Agile / DevOps practices and CI/CD pipelines
Blend of in-house and partner delivery with reuse and standardisation
Faster delivery, higher quality and continuous improvement
People & Skills
Skills and capability vary across the organisation
Limited data and digital skills maturity
Learning is ad-hoc and not role-based
Upskilled workforce with digital and data capability
Clear roles, career pathways and communities of practice
Continuous learning and adoption culture
Empowered workforce, better adoption and greater innovation
Security, Compliance & Governance
Policies in place but inconsistent application
Variable data governance and controls
Cyber security reactive
Security by design using Microsoft E5
Consistent governance, privacy and data protection
Proactive cyber security and risk management
Secure, compliant and trusted services by design
OUR ENABLERS
Strong partnerships
Working with Microsoft, suppliers, GMCA and local partners
Digital inclusion
Ensuring everyone can access and benefit from digital services
Sustainable by design
Using technology to support our Green and Growing mission
Change & engagement
Engaging our people and communities at every step
Value for money
Investing wisely and measuring impact that matters
OUR PURPOSE
Delivering better outcomes for Oldham's residents and communities
Pride, Progress, Partnership – Putting residents at the heart of everything we do

5 Strategic Pillars and Objectives

Summary of the strategic pillars:

- **Digital Infrastructure and Cloud Excellence:** Move to a scalable, secure and energy efficient cloud environment that improves resilience, reduces costs and supports better online services.
- **Intelligent Automation and AI Integration:** Use automation, RPA and AI responsibly to reduce manual tasks, speed up responses and free staff to focus on higher value resident support.
- **Data Excellence and Governance:** Strengthen data quality, integration and governance so the council can make better decisions, improve insight and deliver more personalised services safely.
- **Resident Focused Services:** Design simple, accessible and inclusive digital services that make it easier for residents to engage with the council and get the support they need.
- **Workforce Empowerment and Skills:** Equip staff with modern tools, training and digital confidence so they can work more effectively and provide better services to residents.
- **Innovation and Partnerships:** Work with residents, local businesses and partners to co-create solutions, support inclusion and stimulate local innovation and growth.

The strategy is built on six pillars, each with objectives, projects, and links to council missions. These incorporate solutions like RPA and consultancies' frameworks for transformation, adapted to our local context.

5.1 Pillar 1 - Digital Infrastructure and Cloud Excellence

5.1.1 **Objectives:** Achieve full cloud migration for enhanced scalability.
5.1.2 **Projects:** Phased adoption with suppliers like Microsoft Azure (Years 1 to 2: Complete remaining migrations; Year 2 to 3: Optimisation).
5.1.3 **Resident Focus:** Enables seamless online services, reducing wait times.
5.1.4 **Link to Plans:** Supports Green and Growing through energy efficient cloud.
5.1.5 **KPIs:** 100% cloud adoption; 15% cost reduction.

This pillar forms the backbone of our digital ecosystem, ensuring robust, future proof infrastructure that scales with resident demands.

5.2 Pillar 2 - Intelligent Automation and AI Integration

5.2.1 **Objectives**: Automate tasks to improve efficiency.
5.2.2 **Projects**: RPA pilots for admin processes (Years 1-2); AI agents for resident queries (Years 2-3); Service wide rollout (Years 3-5).
5.2.3 **Resident Focus**: Faster, 24/7 support via chatbots.
5.2.4 **Link**: Advances Healthier, Happier Lives with predictive tools.
5.2.5 **KPIs**: 25% reduction in manual work; quicker responses.

By automating routine tasks, we free up resources for more meaningful resident interactions, enhancing service quality across the board.

5.3 Pillar 3 - Data Excellence and Governance

5.3.1 **Objectives:** Create a unified data platform for insights.
5.3.2 **Projects:** Creation of a Centralised system with analytics tools, System integration and Improvements to Data Quality from back office (Year 1-3); Dashboards for resident services (Year 3). AI driven predictions (Year 3-5).
5.3.3 **Resident Focus:** Personalised services based on data, with privacy safeguards.
5.3.4 **Link:** Enhances data led prevention in Corporate Plan.
5.3.5 **KPIs:** 80% data integration; better decision accuracy.

Strong data governance allows us to make informed decisions that directly benefit residents, from housing to health services.

5.4 Pillar 4 - Resident Focused Services

5.4.1 **Objectives:** Develop accessible digital interfaces.
5.4.2 **Projects:** Portal redesign (Year 2); Inclusive apps with digital inclusion features (Year 2-5).
5.4.3 **Resident Focus:** User friendly access, addressing inclusion via device loans and training.
5.4.4 **Link:** Builds Great Place to Live through community engagement.
5.4.5 **KPIs:** 30% increase in online usage; high satisfaction scores.

Focussing on residents ensures our digital services are intuitive and equitable, bridging any gaps in access.

5.5 Pillar 5 - Workforce Empowerment and Skills

5.5.1 **Objectives**: Equip staff with digital tools.
5.5.2 **Projects**: Desktop Refresh Programme, Training academy with local business input (Years 1-2); AI upskilling and automation (Year 3). Continual Improvement programme in Skills in AI and automation (Years 3-5)
5.5.3 **Resident Focus**: Better trained and digitally enabled staff deliver superior services.
5.5.4 **Link**: Aligns with Together value.
5.5.5 **KPIs**: 90% staff trained; reduced skills gaps.
Investing in our workforce builds internal capabilities, leading to better outcomes for the community.

5.6 Pillar 6 - Innovation and Partnerships

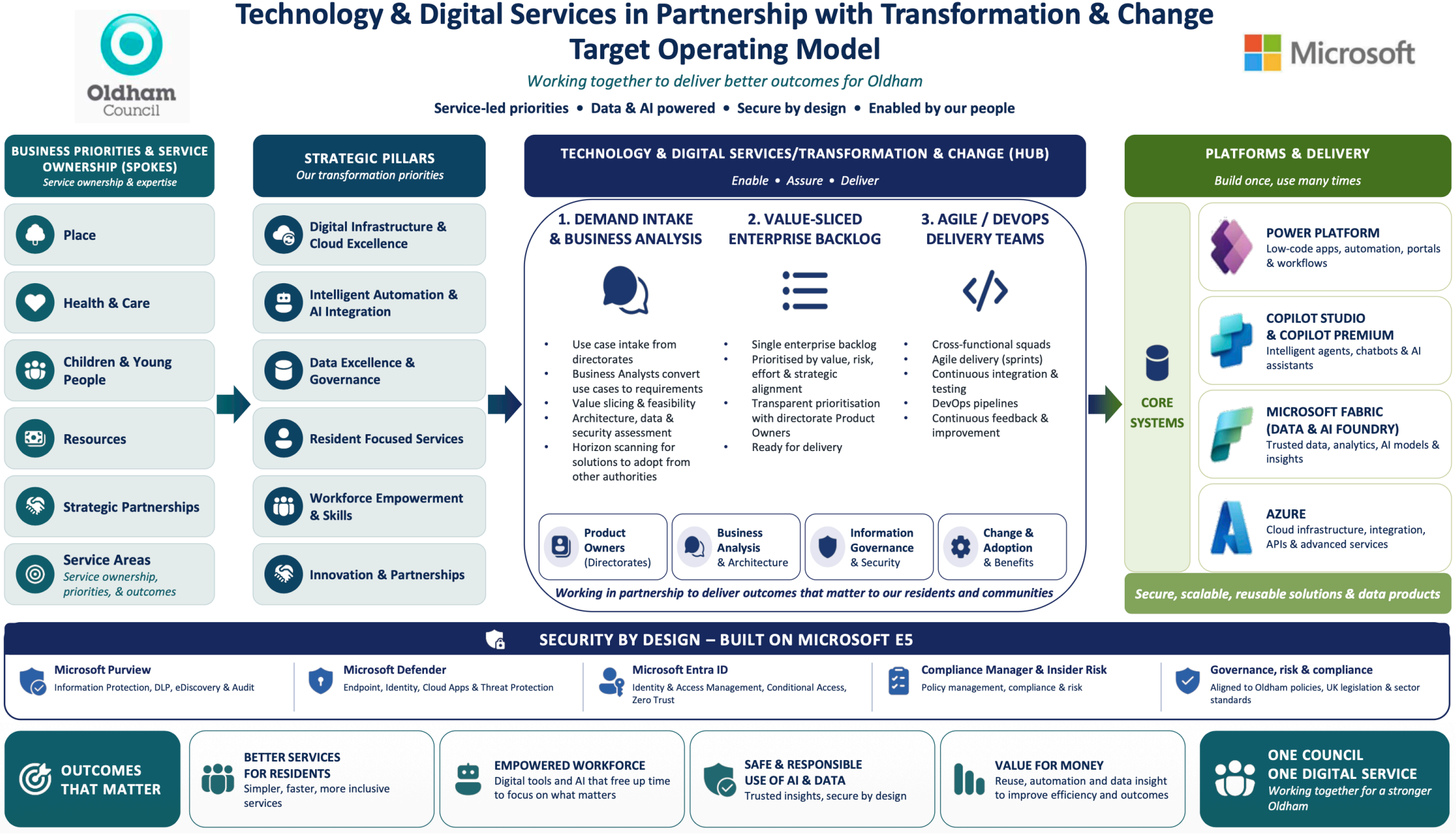
5.6.1 **Objectives:** Collaborate for sustainable innovation.
5.6.2 **Projects:** Engage local firms via Oldham Trading Platform and GM Business Growth Hub (Years 1-5).
5.6.3 **Resident Focus:** Co-create solutions with residents and businesses for inclusion.
5.6.4 **Link:** Supports Oldham Plan partnerships.
5.6.5 **KPIs:** Launch 5 new initiatives; improved inclusion metrics.

Partnerships amplify our efforts, bringing in fresh ideas and resources to drive local growth.

5.7 How we will deliver - Target Operating Model

5.7.1 Figure 2 sets out the Target Operating Model that will turn the six strategic pillars into delivery. Technology & Digital Services working in partnership with Transformation & Change will act as the central Hub, supporting service led priorities (the Spokes). Demand will be taken in through a structured intake process, prioritised into a single enterprise backlog, and delivered by multidisciplinary Agile/DevOps teams. The model is underpinned by the Microsoft platform stack and security by design using Microsoft E5. This operating model ensures clear ownership, enterprise prioritisation, and reusable solutions that deliver better outcomes for residents.

Figure 2:


Technology & Digital Services in Partnership with Transformation & Change
Target Operating Model
Working together to deliver better outcomes for Oldham
Service-led priorities • Data & AI powered • Secure by design • Enabled by our people
Oldham Council
Microsoft
BUSINESS PRIORITIES & SERVICE OWNERSHIP (SPOKES)
Service ownership & expertise
Place
Health & Care
Children & Young People
Resources
Strategic Partnerships
Service Areas
Service ownership, priorities, & outcomes
STRATEGIC PILLARS
Our transformation priorities
Digital Infrastructure & Cloud Excellence
Intelligent Automation & AI Integration
Data Excellence & Governance
Resident Focused Services
Workforce Empowerment & Skills
Innovation & Partnerships
TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL SERVICES/TRANSFORMATION & CHANGE (HUB)
Enable • Assure • Deliver
1. DEMAND INTAKE & BUSINESS ANALYSIS
Use case intake from directorates
Business Analysts convert use cases to requirements
Value slicing & feasibility
Architecture, data & security assessment
Horizon scanning for solutions to adopt from other authorities
2. VALUE-SLICED ENTERPRISE BACKLOG
Single enterprise backlog
Prioritised by value, risk, effort & strategic alignment
Transparent prioritisation with directorate Product Owners
Ready for delivery
3. AGILE / DEVOPS DELIVERY TEAMS
Cross-functional squads
Agile delivery (sprints)
Continuous integration & testing
DevOps pipelines
Continuous feedback & improvement
Product Owners (Directorates)
Business Analysis & Architecture
Information Governance & Security
Change & Adoption & Benefits
Working in partnership to deliver outcomes that matter to our residents and communities
PLATFORMS & DELIVERY
Build once, use many times
CORE SYSTEMS
POWER PLATFORM
Low-code apps, automation, portals & workflows
COPILOT STUDIO & COPILOT PREMIUM
Intelligent agents, chatbots & AI assistants
MICROSOFT FABRIC (DATA & AI FOUNDRY)
Trusted data, analytics, AI models & insights
AZURE
Cloud infrastructure, integration, APIs & advanced services
Secure, scalable, reusable solutions & data products
SECURITY BY DESIGN – BUILT ON MICROSOFT E5
Microsoft Purview
Information Protection, DLP, eDiscovery & Audit
Microsoft Defender
Endpoint, Identity, Cloud Apps & Threat Protection
Microsoft Entra ID
Identity & Access Management, Conditional Access, Zero Trust
Compliance Manager & Insider Risk
Policy management, compliance & risk
Governance, risk & compliance
Aligned to Oldham policies, UK legislation & sector standards
OUTCOMES THAT MATTER
BETTER SERVICES FOR RESIDENTS
Simpler, faster, more inclusive services
EMPOWERED WORKFORCE
Digital tools and AI that free up time to focus on what matters
SAFE & RESPONSIBLE USE OF AI & DATA
Trusted insights, secure by design
VALUE FOR MONEY
Reuse, automation and data insight to improve efficiency and outcomes
ONE COUNCIL ONE DIGITAL SERVICE
Working together for a stronger Oldham

6 Implementation Roadmap

6.1 **Foundation (2025–2026)** Build the base. Complete remaining cloud migrations, establish core platforms and security baselines, run initial RPA and AI pilots, launch digital inclusion programmes, begin workforce skills development, and put the new Hub & Spoke operating model and governance arrangements in place.

6.2 **Scale (2026–2027)** Expand and integrate. Accelerate automation and AI agent deployment, progress data unification and analytics, redesign key resident facing digital services, deepen local and Greater Manchester partnerships, and embed Agile / DevOps delivery practices across the Hub.

6.3 **Optimise (2027–2028)** Innovate and transform. Move to cloud native operations, scale predictive and real time insights, personalise resident experiences, strengthen security, ethics and compliance by design, and drive continuous improvement in skills, processes and technology.

6.4 **Impact (2028–2030)** Lead and pioneer. Deliver resilient and largely autonomous digital foundations, fully embed AI and data led working, achieve outstanding resident satisfaction and inclusion outcomes, simplify the technology estate, and realise the measurable benefits set out in the North Star.

6.5 Figure 3 provides the detailed Horizon Plan that underpins this strategy. It shows how seven capability areas will mature across the four phases above. It moves from building the base to leading and pioneering. The plan aligns directly with the six strategic pillars and the target operating model and sets out the North Star outcomes we are aiming for by the end of 2030.

Success will be measured through efficiency gains, resident and employee satisfaction, cost reduction, lower carbon impact, strong security and compliance, and improved data and AI literacy across the organisation.

Figure 3:


Oldham Council
OLDHAM COUNCIL HORIZON PLAN 2025 – 2030
From Foundations to Impact: Data Led • AI Embedded • Resident Focused
Delivering the ambitions of our Data Strategy and Digital, Data & Technology Strategy
OUR NORTH STAR
Better outcomes for residents
Efficient and effective services
Sustainable growth
Pride, Progress, Partnership
CAPABILITY AREA
2025 to 2026 – FOUNDATION
Build the base
2026 to 2027 – SCALE
Expand & Integrate
2027 to 2028 – OPTIMISE
Innovate & Transform
2028 to 2030 – IMPACT
Lead & Pioneer
NORTH STAR OUTCOME
By end of 2030
1 Digital Foundations
Secure, Cloud & Core Platforms
Cloud ready
Zero Trust baseline
Cloud migration in progress
Security maturity
Cloud native operations
Advanced security
Resilient & autonomous
Zero Trust embedded
Secure, resilient digital foundation
2 Data Platform & Intelligence
Data Driven
Data platform established
Core dashboards
Data integrated across services
Predictive analytics
AI insights at scale
Real-time insights
Data led culture
Advanced AI/ML outcomes
Unified, trusted data driving better decisions
3 AI, Automation & Agents
AI Embedded
Pilot automation
Copilot & agents introduced
Automation scaled across teams
Agents in key services
AI embedded in workflows
Proactive & predictive services
Autonomous operations
AI driving innovation with partners
AI embedded in everyday work for better outcomes
4 Resident & Service Experience
Resident Focused
Digital channels improved
Inclusion initiatives launched
Mobile services expanded
Self-service adoption grows
Personalised experiences
Seamless across services
Inclusive by design
Outstanding resident satisfaction
Seamless, inclusive and personalised services
5 Workforce & Employee Experience
Skills Enabled
Skills gap analysis
Digital skills training starts
Ongoing learning culture
Viva & Copilot adoption
AI-augmented workforce
Productivity improvement
Future-ready workforce
High engagement and retention
Digitally empowered workforce, augmented by AI
6 Governance, Security & Trust
Trusted & Ethical
Governance framework
Privacy & risk assessments
Data quality improves
Compliance strengthened
Ethical AI by design
Continuous monitoring & assurance
Leading practice in AI & data ethics
Transparent & accountable
Trusted, ethical and compliant use of data & AI
7 Technology Convergence & Operating Model
Simplified & Joined Up
ITSM & tools review
ERP planning & integration
ERP implementation progress
Consolidate technology
Integrated ecosystem
Optimise cost & value
Simplified operating model
Continuous improvement
Simplified, integrated and cost-efficient technology ecosystem
MEASURING OUR SUCCESS
20–30% Efficiency gains
High Resident & employee satisfaction
Reduced costs through automation
Lower carbon footprint
Strong security and compliance achieved
Data & AI literacy improved across the organisation
Delivering Pride, Progress, Partnership and a Ready for the Future Oldham.

7 Governance and Measurement

7.1 The Digital Transformation & Design Assurance Group will oversee implementation, incorporating ethical frameworks from the *AI Playbook* (2025) and annual reviews. Metrics include KPIs, resident feedback, and ROI tracking, aligned with transformation guidelines.

7.2 Robust governance keeps us accountable, with measurements tied directly to resident and operational impacts.

8 Challenges and Mitigation

8.1 Potential issues like digital exclusion will be mitigated through government backed action plans, including device donations and skills hubs. Security risks addressed via zero trust models from suppliers like ZScaler. Local business partnerships will ensure tailored, resilient solutions.

8.2 By proactively addressing challenges, we turn potential obstacles into opportunities for stronger community ties.

8.3 This strategy positions Oldham as a digitally inclusive leader, delivering value to residents and the local economy. It reflects thorough research into best practices, adapted to our unique context for maximum impact.

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