

Sustainability Impact Assessment

Digital, Data and Technology Strategy

Please see the accompanying guidance document which provides information to help you fill out this Sustainability Impact Assessment. Please also use the data available on the [Research & Intelligence Centre](#).

The content of this document should be discussed and agreed with the officer responsible for approving sustainability impact assessments in your department before the SIA is approved. This is to make sure the decisions made are not taken in isolation by one officer and that all the potential impacts are considered via a critical friend challenge.

Officer(s) completing the SIA: Nicola Strapps/Helen Walton

Department: Corporate Services

Service / Team: Transformation

Date of assessment: 14th October 2026

Section 1: Impact on society

	What impact will your proposal have? (positive / negative / mixed / none)	Comments, actions and mitigations
Poverty [SDG 1: No Poverty]	Positive	The strategy has strong potential to improve access for residents experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The supplied equality evidence identifies Rochdale as highly deprived, with 34.9% of pupils eligible for free school meals, 6.4% of residents aged 16+ claiming out-of-work benefits and workplace earnings below North West and Great Britain comparators. The strategy has a strong emphasis on digital exclusion in its many forms and we will continue to deliver services to address this. In addition the strengthening of data quality, governance and impact will help the Council target resources, measuring whether services are meeting needs of our communities. Actions/mitigations: keep free/assisted and non-digital routes; use libraries, community assets and Live Well/neighbourhood provision; use plain language; consider device/data/digital-skills barriers in journey design; monitor area-level insight, repeat contact, digital drop-off and assisted-access demand. Avoid digital-only implementation where exclusion risk is material.
Food security [SDG 2: Zero Hunger]	Positive / indirect	The strategy will have no direct impact on food supply. Positive indirect impact is possible through better capture of data and prevention, relational conversations, neighbourhood access and better signposting via digital services may help residents reach appropriate support earlier, including where financial hardship contributes to food insecurity. Actions/mitigations: maintain accurate local support/signposting information; connect access routes with Live Well and neighbourhood/community partners; ensure residents facing hardship can use telephone, face-to-face or assisted routes where digital access is a barrier. Do not claim reductions in food insecurity unless future monitoring provides evidence.
Health and wellbeing [SDG 3: Health and Wellbeing]	Positive / indirect	The strategy explicitly supports prevention and early help, trauma-informed and relational working, fewer hand-offs, clearer communication and access closer to where people live including better use of data. Positive indirect impact is possible

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		through better capture of data and prevention, relational conversations, neighbourhood access and better signposting via digital services may help residents reach appropriate support earlier, including where financial hardship contributes to improved health and wellbeing. The supplied equality data also highlights groups with significant health/access needs, including disabled residents and unpaid carers. Actions/mitigations: retain human support for complex/urgent needs; train and support staff in relational practice; reduce repeated retelling; use neighbourhood/Live Well insight to strengthen early signposting; monitor resident feedback, complaints, repeat contact and prevention indicators. Recognise workforce wellbeing implications where staff support people in distress.
Crime and community cohesion [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions]	Positive / neutral	No direct crime-reduction intervention is proposed. Positive indirect impact may arise from more trusted, consistent and accessible Council contact, clearer ownership, fair standards, neighbourhood working and better routes into support and better access to data and insight. Actions/mitigations: use trauma-informed de-escalation and clear contact standards; maintain routes for people who need support; involve community organisations in consultation; apply fair and proportionate processes where contact needs to be restricted because of abusive behaviour.
Partnership working [SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals]	Positive	Partnership working is central to the strategy. Delivery depends on customer-facing services, Digital/Data/ICT, CRM, Live Well, neighbourhoods, libraries, community assets and external/community partners working around shared customer journeys rather than organisational boundaries. The strategy also promotes working in partnership with local communities as essential to improve digital inclusion. Actions/mitigations: clarify referral and information-sharing arrangements; set named senior owners and workstream responsibilities; align local access routes; involve partners in journey design and consultation; apply privacy/data-minimisation requirements to information sharing.

Section 2: Impact on the economy

	What impact will your proposal have? (positive / negative / mixed / none)	Comments, actions and mitigations
Education and training [SDG 4: Quality education]	Positive / indirect	The strategy can support access to education and training by making Council information and transactions simpler and more accessible and by improving signposting through neighbourhood and partnership routes. Supporting communities to increase their digital skills will also support education and training by supporting residents to get into the workplace and increasing employment opportunities. It will also help the Council workforce to progress into new and changed roles. Actions/mitigations: maintain inclusive/offline routes for residents unable to use digital services; use clear accessible information; work with libraries/community assets on assisted digital access; include workforce training on customer standards, relational practice, digital tools usage, confidence and data use.
Economy and employment [SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth]	Positive / mixed	Potential positive impacts include reduced unnecessary/repeat contact, better first-contact resolution, more efficient digital journeys for routine activity and better use of staff capacity for complex needs. This may support Council productivity and reduce time/cost for residents dealing with the Council. The strategy does not quantify cashable savings at this stage. The Strategy references digital skills training for residents which will increase resident employability and as a consequence contribute to the growth of the local economy. Potential negative/mixed impacts include implementation costs, staff training requirements and capacity pressures. Actions/mitigations: phase delivery; prioritise high-impact journeys; develop benefits measures before claiming savings; monitor staff capacity and service outcomes; keep human support where it adds value and avoids exclusion.
Industry and infrastructure [SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure]	Positive / mixed	The strategy's focus is on improved digital infrastructure, better use of data, modernised technology and use of automated systems. It should all provide better joined-up access. It explicitly states that technology should enable, not lead,

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		service redesign. Internal accessibility evidence requires accessible digital material and compatibility with assistive technology. The strategy will ensure the Council as a key employer in then borough is strongly placed to ensure the digital infrastructure exists locally. Actions/mitigations: start with resident need and customer journeys; use accessible digital design and testing; maintain assisted/non-digital alternatives; apply privacy by design and data minimisation; avoid unnecessary duplication of systems; assess sustainability and accessibility in technology procurement/business cases.
Housing and transport [SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities]	Positive / indirect	The strategy does not directly provide housing or transport. It can improve access to housing and other place-based services through clearer routes, fewer hand-offs, neighbourhood insight and human support for complex needs. Better online access may reduce some journeys to Council buildings, while local/community access can reduce the need to travel to central locations. Actions/mitigations: retain face-to-face provision where needed; consider accessibility and travel implications before changing service locations/channels; align access with Live Well centres, spaces, libraries and community assets; complete service-specific impact assessments for material location changes.

Section 3: Impact on the environment

	What impact will your proposal have? (positive / negative / mixed / none)	Comments, actions and mitigations
Quality of green space and the environment [SDG 15: Life on land]	Neutral / potential positive indirect	The strategy does not directly change green-space management. Potential indirect benefits may arise from easier reporting/requests and neighbourhood insight where environmental services are included in customer journeys. Increased digital access could reduce avoidable travel to Council offices. Actions/mitigations: no environmental benefit should be claimed without implementation evidence; ensure digital transformation does not replace accessible local support where needed.
Renewable energy [SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy]	Neutral	No renewable-energy intervention or energy-generation commitment is included in the DDaT strategy. The increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can have a direct negative impact on the consumption of energy if renewable energy sources are not utilised by the providers. Actions/mitigations: consider energy efficiency and whole-life impacts through ICT/procurement/business cases for material new systems or infrastructure. Consideration must be given to where AI should be implemented and use by services must be responsible to mitigate energy consumption
Reducing waste [SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production]	Positive / mixed	The strategy may support reduced paper and manual processing through better online journeys. It could also reduce duplicated handling/rework. However, digital services and technology have their own material, device and infrastructure impacts. Actions/mitigations: use digital communication where appropriate while retaining accessible alternatives; avoid unnecessary printing; rationalise processes/systems where possible; include responsible procurement and device/e-waste considerations in ICT implementation.
Water supply and water quality [SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation]	Neutral	No direct change to local water supply, local water consumption or local water quality is proposed however there is evidence that the use of AI has a significant

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		impact on water consumption and water contamination on a larger scale so it must be implemented responsibly. Actions/mitigations: processes will be implemented to ensure the responsible use of AI.
Sea around Britain [SDG 14: Life below water]	Neutral	The strategy should have no direct impact on the sea around Britain or marine environment however it must be recognised that the use of AI has a significant impact on water contamination on a larger scale. Such contamination to water courses may in turn cause water contamination to the sea around Britain . Actions/mitigations: none directly at strategy level however, future procurement or operational use of AI and its material impact on marine/waste should be assessed separately.
Adapting to climate change [SDG 13: Climate action]	Positive / mixed	More effective digital/self-service routes for routine transactions and neighbourhood-based access may reduce some resident/staff travel and paper use. Better use of data may help public services respond more efficiently. However, digital systems consume energy and have embedded carbon impacts, so the net climate effect is not yet quantified. AI systems have a significant impact on energy consumption, water consumption and water contamination. Actions/mitigations: consider climate/carbon in technology and procurement decisions; avoid unnecessary travel and printing; monitor material implementation changes; retain resilient non-digital routes so extreme weather or digital disruption does not prevent access.

Section 4: Carbon Assessment

Type of carbon emission	What impact will your proposal have? (positive / neutral / negative / mixed/ unknown)	Comments, actions and mitigations
Scope 1 emissions	Neutral / unknown	The high-level strategy does not directly propose changes to Council-owned fossil-fuel combustion, fleet operations or other identified Scope 1 sources. Future changes to buildings, face-to-face locations or staff travel could affect emissions but are not yet specified. Mitigation: assess Scope 1 impacts in relevant implementation/business cases; avoid attributing reductions to the strategy without measured evidence.
Scope 2 emissions	Mixed / unknown	Potential reductions in office-based processing or physical access may reduce some electricity demand, while greater use of digital platforms, CRM and data processing may increase electricity consumption. The strategy provides no baseline capable of quantifying the net effect. Mitigation: consider energy-efficient hosting/equipment and sustainability requirements through ICT procurement; monitor significant changes where data is available.
Scope 3 emissions	Potential mixed; currently unknown	Potential Scope 3 benefits include reduced resident/staff travel, less paper/post, fewer repeat contacts and more efficient processes. Potential adverse effects include purchased ICT services, devices, cloud/data use and supply-chain emissions. No carbon baseline or quantified forecast is currently available. Use of AI subscriptions and licences with models running on external vendor or cloud provider data centres will have negative impacts on scope 3 emissions Mitigation: include carbon/whole-life considerations in procurement and business cases; prioritise process simplification before new technology; monitor travel, judicious use of AI and other data systems and licences, paper/post and material ICT changes where proportionate.

Section 5: Summary, monitoring and approval

Summarise the overall impact your proposal will have. If there are any negative or mixed consequences, but the proposal is deemed necessary because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, please explain this

Overall assessment: mixed with some currently unquantified environmental/carbon effects.

The strongest anticipated benefits are organisational. The strategy is designed to inform the Council's use of Digital, Data and Technology across its services. This is particularly relevant in the context of socio-economic disadvantage, digital exclusion, disability, caring responsibilities and residents who need relational or face-to-face support.

Economic/productivity benefits may arise from better first-contact resolution, clearer journeys, and greater use of effective self-service for straightforward transactions. These benefits have not been monetised in the strategy and should not be presented as quantified savings without later evidence.

Environmental impacts are mostly indirect. Increased digital access and neighbourhood-based service delivery may reduce travel, paper and postal activity, but increased digital infrastructure also carries energy, equipment and supply-chain impacts.

Key mitigations are:

- Continue commitment to staff education and awareness programmes on the green/climate agenda and increasing carbon literacy champions to ensure increased use of digital tools minimises the environmental impact (for example efficient and effective use of emails) and deliver focussed staff sessions on digital detox
- Ensure data centre usage is maximised
- Promote Digital Sobriety by Encourage responsible usage of digital devices by reducing screen time and turning off devices when not in use.
- Promote energy efficiency to staff and residents e.g. adjust screen brightness, use energy-saving modes, and turn off devices when not in use to reduce energy consumption.
- Sustainable Practices: Support companies committed to sustainable practices and advocate for policies that promote energy-efficient digital infrastructure and responsible e-waste management.
- Recycling and Repair: Encourage recycling and repair of devices to reduce waste and extend their lifespan.
- Educate and Advocate: Foster digital literacy and educate consumers about the environmental impacts of their digital choices.

Outline the governance and monitoring for this SIA

- Name the officer / board / committee:
- Provide the review date:

Proposed governance and monitoring:

- Lead officer: AD, Digital, ICT and Transformation.
- Oversight: DDaT Strategy governance / relevant transformation governance, with reporting to Leadership Team on outcomes, delivery, risks and dependencies.
- Critical-friend / approval: relevant Assistant Director or Director, in line with the SIA template.
; before final strategy approval; when material implementation plans are agreed; and if monitoring identifies an unexpected adverse impact.
- Suggested formal review date: December 2027, or earlier following a material change.

Approval details below are intentionally left for completion by the approving Assistant Director / Director following critical-friend review.

Lead officer approving the SIA assessment (this must be an Assistant Director or Director):

Name: Nicola Strapps

Role: Assistant Director Digital, ICT & Transformation

Date: 21/10/2026

Disclaimer: each directorate is legally responsible for the decisions taken in relation to whether to undertake an SIA and for approving the SIAs produced by the service areas within their department. The role of the Policy Team is to provide advice and guidance.