



Report to:	Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee
Date:	29 February 2024
Subject:	Digital Blueprint Draft
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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

1. Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report provides a draft of the Digital Blueprint. Committee members' feedback and endorsement is sought.
- 1.2 The Committee is asked to consider the following:
 - Is the content of the Digital Blueprint reflective of the strengths and challenges of our region?
 - Are the outcomes relating to place ambitious enough? If not, how could they be bolder?
 - Do you have any other feedback or advice on how the Digital Blueprint could be improved, prior to it being finalised?

2. Information

Background

Digital Blueprint

- 2.1 An update on the Digital Blueprint and the approach to its development was brought to the last Place Committee (26 October 2023) The Blueprint was also considered by the Employment and Skills Committee (ESC) (19 October 2023) and Business, Economy and Innovation Committee (BEIC) (09 November 2023).
- 2.2 The Committee's feedback, which was largely positive, has been incorporated alongside the previous input from LEP board members, private and public sector digital experts, private sector employers, academics and Local Authority members.
- 2.3 All private sector members of Place Committee (alongside Employment and Skills Committee, Business, Innovation and Economy Committee, and LEP Board) were invited to a workshop in September 2023 to help shape the themes of the Digital Blueprint.
- 2.4 A public consultation was live for four weeks from late October until late November 2023. It received 121 responses and results are embedded in the draft Digital Blueprint.
- 2.5 We have shared draft versions of the Digital Blueprint with Local Authority officers. Feedback has largely been constructive, and we've embedded this into the draft copy of the Blueprint.
- 2.6 It is worth noting that Item 6 on the agenda, Monitoring Indicators, indicates the current status of gigabit capable internet coverage and 4G coverage across the region.

Our Approach to a West Yorkshire Digital Blueprint

- 2.7 The Digital Blueprint focuses on the 'horizontal' or 'levers' of 'Place,' 'People and Education' and 'Businesses and Organisations.'
 - '**Place**' refers to infrastructure development, connectivity and connected places.
 - '**People and Education**' refer to digital skills, inclusion, workforce development and educational pathways.'
 - '**Businesses and Organisations**' refer to digital transformation investment entrepreneurship, innovation and research and trade and export promotion.
- 2.8 Interwoven with these three 'horizontal', is seven 'vertical' themes, all of which affect/are affected by the horizontal':
 1. **Showcasing** all the digital opportunities West Yorkshire has to offer
 2. Ensuring that digital technologies make **day-to-day life** easier for West Yorkshire Residents and businesses.

3. Ensuring that we are benefitting from **advanced technologies**, such as emerging work in fields of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and quantum computing.

4. Tackling **digital exclusion**.

5. Understanding and using **data** to make West Yorkshire a well-connected digital destination.

6. Establishing digital as a method to help West Yorkshire work towards tackling the **climate emergency**.

7. **Collaborative working** of digital stakeholders in West Yorkshire

2.9 Pending the endorsement of Place, BEIC and ESC Committees, the Digital Blueprint will be considered by the Combined Authority Committee, ahead of approval and publication.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

3.1 Delivery of digital infrastructure offers cross cutting benefits that support the move towards net zero and tackling the climate emergency.

3.2 Digitally enabled infrastructure will accelerate progress towards clean, low carbon, and resilient energy systems, as innovative urban planning, public services, and access are optimised. Examples may include smart streetlamps to self-cooling buildings to smart electric car chargers. The data captured by digitally enabled devices will provide diverse datasets on a wide range of topics, such as energy consumption, air quality and traffic patterns. The Blueprint will also explore opportunities to map our regional assets that will allow for delivery aligned and strategic sequencing – ensuring that we need only ‘dig once’ – reducing our carbon impact.

3.3 Moreover, it is recognised that increased levels of connectivity, allow for residents to work remotely, and for businesses to set up in a more decentralised format. This means that there can be a reduced need to commute, with fewer vehicles on the road, thus reducing carbon emissions.

4. Inclusive Growth Implications

4.1 Digitally enabled places will accelerate progress towards accessible and inclusive spaces and transport in our region. An exemplar focus may include residents in rural areas without access to fast broadband; as of 2021, 4% of people in Yorkshire and Humber remain offline, even though West Yorkshire’s full fibre and gigabit coverage are both above the national average.

5. Equality and Diversity Implications

5.1 Digital exclusion is a key barrier to participation in social and economic activity. A refreshed Digital Framework will help us to maximise the opportunity that integrated digital policy, people and technology can offer to improve inclusivity.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Combined Authority officers are leading on the development of the Blueprint utilising existing resources. Therefore, there are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Staffing Implications

8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9. External Consultees

9.1 We have consulted with external stakeholders in the development of the Digital Blueprint. A public consultation through YourVoice was recently undertaken on Our Digital Blueprint for West Yorkshire. The consultation closed on 23rd November 2023.

10. Recommendations

10.1 That the Committee endorse the Digital Blueprint. That the Committee delegate endorsement to the Chair in the case of outstanding feedback from members, ahead of the first design.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 – DIGITAL BLUEPRINT DRAFT