
Report to: Place, Regeneration & Housing Committee

Date: 2 March 2023

Subject: **West Yorkshire Digital Blueprint & Local Digital Partnership**

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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 outlines proposals to refresh the 2019 Digital Framework and the creation of a Local Digital Partnership.

2. Information

Contextual Background

- 2.1. At the October LEP Board Meeting, members discussed the importance of a renewed focus on digital tech to support the region's ambitions.
- 2.2. Digital is a cross-cutting issue and has the potential to enable every person, every business and every place in the region. People need digital skills and good quality and affordable internet access to help them get the most out of their lives. All businesses need to consider, invest in and develop their approach in a way that utilises the latest advancements and innovations. This way all of our business community can be enabled to be more productive and more likely to survive and thrive. Our region also wants to be the key location for high growth digital businesses to grow and invest in and as well as a digitally connected place that is utilising the most of technology.
- 2.3. These issues span social inclusion, place making, business support, skills, and inward investment. This, therefore, does not fall under the remit of just

one committee. We need to consider how we develop all our digital work using the expertise, knowledge and connections of all committee members.

Developing a West Yorkshire Digital Blueprint

- 2.4. The region's Digital Framework was published in 2019. This focused on enabling business digitalisation, promoting digital skills, growing the tech sector, developing world-class digital infrastructure and utilising tech for social good (such as adoption smart cities capabilities).
- 2.5. Since then, the LEP's geographic remit has altered (in April 2021), moving to the five West Yorkshire districts.
- 2.6. With the change in geography coinciding with increased digital adoption by residents and businesses during COVID, new trading relations with the European Union, and significant advances in technology, it is timely to refresh the Digital Framework.
- 2.7. Refreshing the Digital Framework, provides an opportunity to draw together all elements of digital and ensure that West Yorkshire is a 'Smart Region'.
- 2.8. A refreshed Digital Framework (which will be named a Digital Blueprint) will update on how lives are transformed by digital technologies and will include a coherent strategy for delivery and partnership working, which is proposed to be framed into three strands:
 - **Place:** infrastructure, data (and connectivity), smart cities
 - **People:** inclusion, skills and confidence, entrepreneurs, and advanced skills (much of which can be transferred from the recently launched Digital Skills Plan)
 - **Businesses:** clusters, transformation, inward investment, education providers (in partnership with businesses), capital.
- 2.9. Specifically relevant to this committee is the **Place** strand of the new Blueprint. This will focus on outlining our priorities for:
 - **Infrastructure / Data:** ensuring the region is a well-connected place providing the latest digital infrastructure networks such as 5G and fibre-optic broadband.
 - **Smart Cities** (also referred to as 'Connected Places'): how towns and cities across West Yorkshire can build smart infrastructure and provide real time urban management.
- 2.10. Initial views are welcome from the committee on the scope of these sections of the Blueprint, including suggestions on the objectives and priorities for infrastructure and smart cities.

- 2.11. It is anticipated that the Digital Blueprint will be approved in late Summer / early Autumn of 2023, and will come to the committee for further comment before approval.

Creating a Local Digital Partnership (LDP)

- 2.12. The Combined Authority currently hosts a Local Digital Skills Partnership (LDSP). This is in its third and final year of DCMS funding.
- 2.13. Following the approval of the West Yorkshire Digital Skills Plan, the LDSP has accomplished its core aims. These include:
- The publication of the Digital Skills Plan.
 - Establishing networks of both internal and external stakeholders across the region, working in partnership to identify where digital skills provision is required, and what gaps in current provision exist.
 - Establishing a strong partnership with colleagues in DSIT (formerly DCMS), positioning West Yorkshire as a key national stakeholder with regards to future Digital interventions and trailblazer initiatives.
 - Develop an inclusive approach to Digital skills provision that gives people the skills they need, and the businesses the digital talent they require.
- 2.14. The LDSP's KPIs (as agreed with DCMS) give a level of insight into the success of the initiative:
- 15422 views of digital skills resources on the FutureGoals platform (versus a target of 1000), with planned future development of a platform supported by IBM SkillsBuild.
 - 3748 individuals supported through digitally-focused AEB courses (versus a target of 3000), with plans to roll out the 100% Digital programme across West Yorkshire aiming to impact 1000 further individuals.
 - 224 SMEs supported to increase Digital Skills capacity through the Skills for Growth programme, with the recently approved Business West Yorkshire programme seeking to further support businesses in this space.
 - 151 schools supported to deliver digital skills engagement programmes.
- 2.15. Going forward, there is an opportunity, therefore, to explore how to build on the success of the LDSP including broadening the LDSP into a 'Local Digital Partnership (LDP)'. This Partnership would act as an engagement and consultancy panel to support any activity of a new Digital Blueprint. DCMS is supportive of this approach. Membership of the LDP will be drawn from the Committees and beyond.

3. Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1. Greater adoption of digital technologies by businesses will facilitate efficiency and waste by reduction. For example: customers will be enabled to make first contact online, reducing the need to travel; paperless offices and cloud storage use less resource and energy; delivery mapping technology optimises route plans to reduce carbon emissions.
- 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.¹

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, despite the fact that 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. 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. No external consultations have been undertaken.

10. Recommendations

¹ <https://www.iea.org/news/empowering-smart-cities-toward-net-zero-emissions>

10.1. That the Place, Regeneration & Housing Committee notes the content of the report and provides initial feedback to officers on the potential scope of the new Digital Blueprint.

10.2. That the Committee also notes the proposals for a Local Digital Partnership.

11. Background Documents

There are no background documents referenced in this report.

12. Appendices

None.