

Subject:	Greater Brighton Digital Action Plan		
Date of Meeting:	28 January 2020		
Report of:	Nick Hibberd		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Paul Brewer	Tel: 07881 323471
	Email:	paul.brewer@adur-worthing.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 At the Greater Brighton Economic Board (the Board) Meeting on 15 October 2019, the Board was presented with the draft Greater Brighton Digital Strategy. The key recommendation in the paper, subsequently approved by the Board, was that the Strategy be agreed in its current form and for work to commence on the development of an action plan with responsibilities, timescales and resources allocated appropriately.
- 1.2 The draft Strategy looked at two key aspects. The first was around deployment and activation of key infrastructure, particularly next generation full fibre. The second theme explored the opportunities that new infrastructure will unlock and the potential for Greater Brighton Economic Board to take a strategic leadership role in harnessing the many significant opportunities the new infrastructure will bring.
- 1.3 The paper generated much discussion at the 15 October Board meeting and it was decided that the development of the Action Plan could be well supported by giving Board Members and other key stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the issues in greater detail.
- 1.4 To that end a workshop for Board Members and other key partners was held at Ricardo Innovation Centre on 6 January 2020 and this paper represents a collation of the ideas and recommendations for next steps made at that meeting.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Board agrees with the key priorities and projects identified from the workshop outlined in this paper and the Action Plan at Appendix 1. Actions suggested for the Board itself are outlined below.
- 2.2 That the Board endorse the multimode delivery model for full fibre as outlined in the strategy, recognising the need for different models in different contexts.
- 2.3 That the Board creates/identifies a group to explore an integrated visitor destination strategy to include digital expert representation.

- 2.4 That the Board supports the identification of local authority transport leads, and supports a discovery workshop on smart/intelligent transport.
- 2.5 That the Board requests a workshop on “business and digital” bringing Business Hothouse partners, representatives from economic development teams and digital experts together to explore opportunities to develop the digital offer to businesses in relation to productivity and innovation.
- 2.5 That the Board request local authority contributions to a mapping exercise for resident/community digital inclusion initiatives across the Greater Brighton for reporting to a future Board meeting.
- 2.6 That the Board considers how to establish a bid development fund to allow for the creation of “bid-ready” project proposals, potentially through contributions from member authorities. Projects requiring funding are highlighted in the action plan.
- 2.7 That the Board acknowledges the strategic role being played by the Everything Connects group chaired by Alex Bailey, and notes the extension of an invitation to join for Lewes District Council, delivering representation from all areas.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 At the Board Meeting on 29 January 2019 the Board’s Five Year Strategic Priorities paper was approved. In the paper, five strategic themes are identified; International, Creative, Connected, Talented and Resilient.
- 3.2 Under the Connected priority, activation of full-fibre infrastructure across the City Region has been identified as the key project with a target to increase the number of residential and business premises utilising full fibre connection across the city region and maximising its potential to facilitate economic growth. This very much built on a report presented by Mid Sussex District Council in October 2018, which demonstrated the need for the installation of full fibre across the City Region to stimulate productivity and investment in the area.
- 3.3 The approved Greater Brighton Digital Strategy should be seen as a statement of intent, which reviewed activity already underway, identified areas at an early stage of development and models for full fibre delivery, and provided recommendations around next steps. Within the Strategy 11 themes were identified;
 - 1. Full Fibre
 - 2. 5G
 - 3. Public Connectivity (Citizen Wi-Fi)
 - 4. Internet of Things
 - 5. Business
 - 6. Retail
 - 7. Visitors
 - 8. Transport & Environmental Monitoring
 - 9. Work & Skills
 - 10. Health & Social Care
 - 11. Digital Inclusion

- 3.4 The first two themes focus on digital connectivity and access. There is a significant amount of work underway across the City Region for delivering full fibre. West Sussex district and borough councils have established a coordinating group, Everything Connects, chaired by Alex Bailey, Chief Executive at Adur & Worthing Councils with Brighton & Hove City Council recently joining. This group has supported the coordination and progress of many of the projects underway and is building strategic capacity for the digital agenda.
- 3.5 The emergence of 5G has been well documented. 5G will deliver average mobile download speeds of 130Mb-240Mb and, importantly, very low latency (delay), opening up a wide range of opportunities for smart manufacturing and agriculture, traffic management and autonomous vehicles, remote monitoring and control solutions, artificial intelligence and holography. 5G is reliant on widespread full fibre infrastructure for its masts and many small cells, underlining the strategic importance of delivering dense fibre networks as a critical step to being 5G-ready.
- 3.6 The focus on the remaining themes is around digital services. The digital services themes address the value-generating services that use the new connectivity, and include intelligent transport systems, smart energy solutions, open data services, cloud computing, digital services and others.
- 3.7 It was decided that the focus of the workshop should be around digital services. The rationale for this is that there is already a lot of work going on in the infrastructure space across the region; through Coast to Capital (C2C) and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funded programmes and through groups such as Everything Connects. There is greater scope for the Board and City Region around taking a lead on the digital services. Furthermore, given the range of pressures public services are under, there are significant capability, capacity and funding gaps that are already leading to missed opportunities across a range of areas. The Strategy highlighted the potential in a number of areas and what first steps might be taken. Undertaking research and building propositions in these areas will enable the Greater Brighton City Region to be “bid ready”.
- 3.8 Given the time available at the workshop, five of the themes were prioritised above the others;
- Public Connectivity (Citizen Wi-Fi)
 - Internet of things
 - Business
 - Retail
 - Visitors

Public Connectivity (Citizen Wi-Fi)

- 3.9 In a recent survey conducted by Adur & Worthing Councils 42% of respondents reported experiencing poor mobile network coverage. Wi-Fi services are important with 78% of those surveyed using them to plug poor mobile network coverage, manage their data limits and benefit from better speeds. Citizen Wi-Fi is a concept that if designed well could be deployed across the City Region providing a trusted brand and an opportunity for continuous engagement for

citizens and businesses; 91% of survey respondents said that they would use Citizen Wi-Fi if provided by a trusted source.

- 3.10 The recommendation made in the Digital Strategy to prototype the Citizen Wi-Fi model in Worthing was supported. There was acknowledgement that as part of this work there was a need to identify the outcomes and benefits. This would involve detailed user research with retailers, businesses, visitors and shoppers, and this would cut across several of the other themes. As part of this learning there is an opportunity to review and learn from similar work elsewhere, and site visits to York and/or Falmouth were proposed.
- 3.11 The prototype in Worthing would centre around an urban area. There were calls at the workshop to look at identifying an additional pilot area that is more rural, so that the model can be tested in a more rural setting. Generally speaking the more rural areas are likely to experience poorer mobile coverage than the urban centres, so Citizen Wi-Fi successfully deployed in rural areas could deliver real benefits to those communities.

Internet of things

- 3.12 A strategic approach to the internet of things (IoT) is vital for Greater Brighton as it will enable standardised and well-managed approaches to a number of solutions such as traffic management, air quality management, flood risk detection and many others.
- 3.13 The recommendation made in the Digital Strategy was to commission a study to develop an IoT Strategy for the City Region, to incorporate open data standards and data privacy standards, and this has since evolved. The emerging Greater Brighton and Water and Energy Plans are near completion and will be presented to the Board in April. Some of the projects and policy initiatives arising from those plans should provide opportunities to explore the use of smart technologies to help monitor and manage demand for energy and water and reduce carbon emissions. The £32m smart hubs project in Worthing and Shoreham will provide particular opportunities to understand the development of smart local energy systems and the use of sensors and data to better understand and manage supply and demand.
- 3.14 The smart transport workshop proposed in 2.4 above, will allow next steps to be identified in relation to the use of sensors and other smart technologies in the transport arena.
- 3.15 Adur & Worthing Councils are currently undertaking a mapping exercise for the establishment of a low power sensor network (LoraWan) across the council areas. This involves identifying how many antennas would be needed to provide full coverage, allowing sensors to be deployed anywhere, and their data collected by a central platform. The councils are exploring the use of sensors to help track visitor data such as footfall, identify when public refuse bins are almost full, provide early flood warnings, and allow community groups to track air quality.

Business

- 3.16 There is a need to understand the needs of both digital and non-digital businesses to ensure digital inclusion across the business community. Without support, non-digital businesses are likely to not have the resource, expertise or capability to review and transform the technologies they use to deliver their business, and this is especially true for SMEs. The intention will be to hold a Discovery workshop with Business Hot House delivery partners and other business support programmes, mapping digital/innovation needs of businesses against infrastructure being delivered by the Digital Strategy.
- 3.17 There was a strong view at the workshop that many businesses, particularly SMEs, do have skills gaps – particularly in analytical skills. There is a lot of data that can be captured to inform business decisions but there is a lack of understanding of how to extract/access the data, and then once obtained how to analyse it.
- 3.18 To be able to best support business, those providing the guidance need to have a good understanding of the opportunities and challenges. A skills gap was identified in that Economic Development Staff within local authorities, Chambers of Commerce, and other institutions, require upskilling in the areas of digital services and data analytics.
- 3.19 A potential opportunity was identified around establishing a “KiteMark” or grading system for commercial premises to show the level of connectivity in place at the site. There are examples of this already in existence, particularly in the Build to rent space. This would have the benefit of informing businesses of what connectivity to expect at a potential office, identify hot-spots and not-spots and encourage landlords and developers to put in high speed capabilities to increase occupancy and rents.

Retail

- 3.20 Research suggests that consumers want digital mobile channels to complement instore shopping opportunities. Retail is very much alive, so the rise of digital should be seen as an opportunity for the sector and not a threat that will kill the high street. Push notifications to shopper smartphones notifying them of real-time deals and augmented reality apps that expand the range of products available in store are some of the possibilities. Seamless connectivity will be required to make the most of the opportunity, so there are clear linkages with the Citizen Wi-Fi theme.
- 3.21 With retail being an important sector within the wider business community, there were clear linkages in many of the points raised in 3.16-3.19. There was acknowledgment that there is a need to work more with education partners to look at how you get digital inclusion and learning opportunities into the high-street e.g. Apple learning forums, and how best to support SMEs to understand how new technology can benefit their business models.
- 3.22 Discussions identified a need for local authorities to work with retailers in the planning of digital spaces e.g. engaging with the Citizen Wi-Fi prototype, and other digital realm potential uses including events/experience planning etc.

There is also an opportunity for a digital retail expert to present to the Everything Connects Group, so that group can build current trends and future opportunities into its thinking.

- 3.23 With regards planning in a more general sense, there is a need to get a consistent approach to town centre planning across planning authorities so that digital infrastructure is always in situ and deployed in a value-for-money way. Current planning discussions with West Sussex planning authorities tends to be more around residential developments, so there needs to be a greater focus on urban development.
- 3.24 The Board, and its partners, need to ensure we are talking to the DCMS and sharing our plans with a view to exploit future funding opportunities. This is also true for Coast to Capital as they work towards finalising a Local Industrial Strategy that will cover Greater Brighton and the wider West Sussex region. This point cuts across all themes.

Visitors

- 3.25 Creating engaging and dynamic digital experiences for visitors is a significant opportunity, that will help them find and engage with the wide and varied offer that Greater Brighton has to offer. A visitor experience is largely driven by the heart and not by the head, so there is a strong need to develop compelling content that is rapidly changing and managed appropriately.
- 3.26 There is a need to create itineraries that will make people stay longer and spend more. To do this there needs to be a clear understanding of visitor behaviour but currently this information is disparate and fragmented. The suggestion was that a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) or working group be established that would take a regional view of the visitor economy. This group would need to include some digital experts to shape thinking and direction. There are clear links here with the Greater Brighton Destination Experience Group established in 2019.
- 3.27 There also needs to be clarity around what the offer is. Again, there are many different offers across the Greater Brighton area, some of which complement each other and others which may be in competition. There needs to be a clear understanding of what the Greater Brighton offer is and then it needs to be communicated through appropriate channels. Currently work is underway to develop a Pitch for Place for the City Region and then the establishment of an Inward Investment Desk. The Pitch for Place work will start building an identity for the City Region and look at what the unique offer is.

Other Themes

- 3.28 The discussions at the digital session naturally drifted into other themes as there is a degree of overlap and connection between them. In terms of the infrastructure (Full Fibre and 5G), the Everything Connects Group is co-ordinating fibre delivery strategy across West Sussex, and therefore much of the Greater Brighton area. It would be helpful if all GBEB authorities are represented on the Group to ensure that knowledge and best practice is shared and all work across the region is aligned.

- 3.29 Transport will be a priority target area for carbon reduction within the Greater Brighton Energy plan. Intelligent transport systems and smart cities will be crucial in reducing emissions, promoting active travel, increasing access and improving the overall efficiency of the City Region's transport networks. Again, digital connectivity will be the enabler of these new technologies so it would be helpful to hold a transport discovery event for lead transport officers from Greater Brighton and wider South East region.
- 3.30 Digital inclusion was discussed under several of the themes at the workshop as outlined above. There is a challenge going forwards around making sure that everyone can benefit from the new connectivity and the services that will be developed to utilise it. Some businesses have the skills and means to benefit from new services, but others do not, and this is also true for households or individuals. The suggestion was that as a starting point officers should develop a report for a future Board Meeting on digital inclusion provision at each local authority. The report would need to specify funding levels, providers, numbers reached and future plans. Once we know the current offering we can then look at how the gaps can be addressed.
- 3.31 In terms of Work and Skills it became clear from the discussions on Business and Retail that there is a need to build knowledge and capacity within Economic Development Teams, starting with conducting gap analysis in the first instance.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATIONS OF OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 Given that Government have made it clear that Digital Infrastructure is a priority, other cities and city regions are looking to move ahead quickly in this space. In many domains the Greater Brighton City Region is at an early stage, and in others it is among the most advanced in the UK. The existence of the West Sussex Gigabit Programme, a strong cluster of creative digital businesses, the 5G Testbed and funding secured to establish a 5G ring, provide a strong platform on which to move forwards. There is a need to grasp the opportunity and build a strategic approach that could see Greater Brighton as a leader in digital futures in the UK. Hence the Board is recommended to seriously consider how to establish a digital fund to allow the development of investable propositions. The Digital Strategy and Action Plan has been developed with no budget so far, and progress to match the size of the opportunity will only be enabled with some development funding.
- 4.2 An alternative to the recommended next steps would be to adopt a do-nothing approach or take an inconsistent approach across the region, which would risk the Greater Brighton region being left behind and pose a threat to future productivity, competitiveness and prosperity.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper details the discussions at the recent Digital Strategy Workshop and the suggested next actions to arise from those discussions. These actions are summarised in Appendix 1, and as per recommendations 2.1 to 2.7 the next step is to agree on this direction of travel, move to deliver the proposed actions and consider options for project development funding.

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although consideration is being given for potential member contributions to support proposals for mapping exercises for resident/community digital inclusion initiatives across Greater Brighton and contributions toward establish a bid development fund to allow for the creation of “bid-ready” project proposals. These options will need to be tested and reported back to this Board.

Finance Officer Consulted: Rob Allen, Principal Accountant
Date: 16/01/2020

Legal Implications:

- 6.2 At this stage, there are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Lawyer Consulted: Joanne Dougnaglo, Senior Property Lawyer
Date: 15/01/2020

Equalities Implications:

- 6.3 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. The equalities implications will be addressed on a project by project basis.

Sustainability Implications:

- 6.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 6.5 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Greater Brighton Digital Action Plan

Background Documents

1. [Greater Brighton Digital Strategy](#)