Sheffield
City Region
MAYORAL
COMBINED AUTHORITY

INFRASTRUCTURE BOARD

9th January 2020

SOUTH YORKSHIRE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY UPDATE

Purpose

This report provides an update with the preparation of the Sheffield City Region Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

Freedom of Information and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

This paper would be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to:

1. Note the update and comment on the proposed commission for external support set out in para 2.4.

1. **Background**

    1.1   A report on the current roll-out of fibre superfast broadband and full fibre and 5G broadband across South Yorkshire was considered at the August meeting of the Board.

    1.2   This report provides an update with developing a shared Digital Infrastructure Strategy for South Yorkshire, for the Board's information, which will set out the framework for accelerating enhanced full fibre and 5G broadband across the region.

2. **Proposal and justification**

    2.1   Although the Superfast South Yorkshire Programme is still in delivery, it is clear that digital infrastructure remains critical in terms of achieving future sustained growth within the City Region, with the emerging Strategic Economic Plan seeing further improvements as being essential to the long-term health of the economy.

    2.2   As the City Region develops and grows over the next 3-5 years, there will become increased demand for high speed connectivity for everyone. Therefore, as the Board previously agreed, there is a clear need for a new Digital Infrastructure Strategy for South Yorkshire in order to give residents and businesses confidence that their future connectivity needs will be met. It will help to demonstrate that the region is pro-investment and is *open for business* and ensure that the Region has the infrastructure in place to meet the following connectivity requirements:

- To enable businesses to be more productive and more competitive, to grow through digitisation;

- To sustain and grow the digital sector, in new and emerging technologies;

- To provide full area coverage so that residents, workers and visitors are always connected;

- To facilitate rapid adoption of smart services such as 5G, Internet of Things (IoT), internet Connected Vehicles;

- To enable public services to be delivered more efficiently, more effectively, and to be accessible online;

- To create jobs, to learn and apply the skills needed for the infrastructure, products and services;

- To meet the demands from an increasing resident population, ensuring sufficient network capacity;

2.3 It was reported at the previous Board meeting in August that the Superfast South Yorkshire Programme Board had prepared a document that provided a strong foundation for the Digital Strategy. This work has been endorsed by each of the Authorities and has been incorporated into a document reflecting the in-house style of the SCR. This has highlighted some gaps, such as in the evidence base and potential interventions, but also importantly, regards an understanding of the 'Market' and related macro issues that will impact on the roll-out of the full fibre and 5G across South Yorkshire.

2.4 A brief to appoint an external specialist has therefore been prepared to provide this independent perspective and advice. The commission will ask for support in providing understanding of the following:

- providing an independent 'reality check' of the Market around full fibre and 5G provision;

- providing an understanding of the policy direction of the new Government and future related opportunities around the digital and related policy agendas;

- identifying additional interventions and actions that would be necessary to support full-fibre and 5G roll-out across South Yorkshire; and

- providing advice on how we can collectively improve our business cases to enable greater success in bidding for future Government funding opportunities relating to digital infrastructure.

2.5 It is intended to begin the procurement for commissioning this support in early January with a view to complete by the end of March 2020. The outputs of this work will inform the final South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

3.1 Alternative approaches are being considered as part of developing the Strategy to inform the preferred strategic aims, objectives, outputs and outcomes.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

The funding for the commission will be funded through the SCR infrastructure budget.

4.2 Legal

None as a direct result of this report.

4.3 Risk Management

Key risks are:
- Individual authorities not engaging or unable to support elements of the work.
- Disagreements between individual planning authorities on any potential contentious issues.
- The budget not being sufficient to commission the necessary external support.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

Ensuring digital inclusion for all will be a key purpose of the Digital Infrastructure Strategy, aligning with the intentions of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty. The work programme set out above is designed to enhance and support work at the local level by adding value and creating some economies of scale.

5. Communications

5.1 Engagement and consultation opportunities through the preparation process will be communicated openly, as well as the final document later in 2020.

6. Appendices/Annexes

6.1 None

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Background papers used in the preparation of this report are available for inspection at: 11 Broad Street West, Sheffield S1 2BQ

Other sources and references: