

HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE BOARD

4th March 2021

SOUTH YORKSHIRE DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

Purpose of Report

To present the key elements of the emerging South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

Thematic Priority

This report relates to the following Strategic Economic Plan priorities:

Secure investment in infrastructure where it will do most to support growth

Freedom of Information

The paper will be available under the Combined Authority Publication Scheme.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

1. Comment on the emerging evidence base and the proposed draft Vision and key objectives to inform the Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy; and
2. Note the proposed next steps in preparing the Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The consultant Arcadis was commissioned in June 2020 to support the Mayoral Combined Authority and partners to prepare a South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy. Initial findings from Phase 1 of the commission which involved obtaining the views and requirements of a range of public and private stakeholders was reported to this Board in October 2020.
- 1.2** This report presents the Consultant's key proposals for the emerging South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy and requests the Board's comments and steer to inform the development of the Draft Strategy.

2. Proposal and justification

Progress

- 2.1** The principle objectives of the commission are to:

1. Provide an independent 'reality check' of the Market around full fibre and 5G provision in South Yorkshire and nationally;
 2. Suggest any additional interventions or approaches that could yield additional benefit;
 3. Enhance the existing digital connectivity work to prepare an up-to-date and holistic Digital Infrastructure Strategy for South Yorkshire;
 4. Provide an initial assessment of public assets with the potential to support and contribute to the full fibre and 5G roll-out; and
 5. Provide guidance and advocacy to enable better access to Government and Government investment for digital infrastructure implementation.
- 2.2** Since the previous Board meeting Arcadis has focussed on collating and analysing the evidence base on the extent and type of digital infrastructure there is in the region; what digital coverage there is across South Yorkshire and where are there potential coverage gaps; what infrastructure investments digital infrastructure providers and the public sector are making; and where are public assets situated that could support industry roll-out programmes.
- 2.3** Arcadis has also been engaging with digital infrastructure providers, local authorities, NHS bodies, local universities, utility companies, and local businesses to explore potential interventions and approaches that could form part of the implementation of the Strategy. Furthermore, Arcadis has also undertaken an appraisal of previous unsuccessful bids to Government for digital infrastructure funding to better understand how to strengthen funding bids in the future.

Vision and Key Strategic Themes

- 2.4** Taking the lead from the Strategic Economic Plan, the proposed draft Vision for the Digital Infrastructure Strategy is:

A Gigabit digital infrastructure that accelerates new social and economic possibilities for all the people and businesses of South Yorkshire

- 2.5** The Consultant proposes the following five key strategic objectives to deliver this Vision:
1. Ensure South Yorkshire's superfast broadband and 4G success is repeated for Gigabit broadband and 5G;
 2. Support the social and economic priorities set out in the Strategic Economic Plan;
 3. Form an inclusive platform that enables better outcomes for all sections of society;
 4. Be supported by the Governance and data-driven approach needed to maximise the digital potential of South Yorkshire; and
 5. Position South Yorkshire as a centre of applied digital innovation.
- 2.6** The presentation attached at Appendix 1, which will be presented by Arcadis, provides further details relating to the Vision and each of these strategic objectives. The views of the Board are invited on these emerging key proposals to inform the development of the Strategy.

Next Steps

- 2.7** Taking into account the Board's views on the emerging proposals for the Strategy, the Consultant will focus on preparing the Strategy itself with a view to initially discussing the emerging Draft Strategy with the Superfast South Yorkshire Board, which comprises

officers from all four local authorities, and which is acting as the 'Sounding Board' for the preparation of the Strategy. The intention is to present the Draft Strategy for this Board's consideration at the Board's next meeting in June.

3. Consideration of alternative approaches

- 3.1** Alternative approaches and options are being considered as part of developing the Strategy, which are being informed by the evidence base. The initial Draft Strategy may include a range of options particularly relating to prioritisation and potential market interventions.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial

All activities set out in this report will be delivered from within existing resources. Where any further external work needs to be commissioned, funds for this will need to be identified.

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; however to date engagement has been high.
- Disagreements between individual planning authorities on any potential contentious issues.
- The digital 'Market' evolving so rapidly that it is difficult to ensure the Strategy is future proofed and remains relevant.
- That sufficient funding and investment is not available and/or funding and delivery partners are not committed to implementing the Strategy once completed.

4.4 Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion

Ensuring digital inclusion for all will be a key purpose of the South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy, aligning with the intentions of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty and the inclusivity policy approach of the Strategic Economic Plan. 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 are key components in the development of the Strategy. The final approved document can be publicised later in 2021 once completed and approved, and there may be media opportunities related to any interventions being proposed to implement the Strategy.

6. Appendices/Annexes

- 6.1** Appendix 1 – Presentation: South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy Emerging Strategic Proposals

REPORT AUTHOR POST

Officer responsible
Organisation

Colin Blackburn
Assistant Director Housing, Infrastructure & Planning
Mark Lynam
Sheffield City Region

Email Mark.lynam@sheffieldcityregion.org.uk
Telephone 0114 2203445

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: None