

## Local Enterprise Partnership

09 September 2021

### Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy

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Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
<i>Reason why exempt:</i>	Not applicable
<b>Purpose of this report:</b>	Policy Decision
<b>Funding Stream:</b>	Not applicable
<b>Is this a Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Has it been included on the Forward Plan?</b>	Yes

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**Director Approving Submission of the Report:**

Martin Swales, Interim Director of Transport, Housing and Infrastructure

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**Executive Summary:**

To comment on and endorse the Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

**What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?**

If implemented the Strategy would help improve business productivity and competitiveness; address digital exclusion and digital poverty; and make South Yorkshire places more attractive to inward investors and as places to live and work.

**Recommendations:**

The Board is asked to:

- Consider and endorse the Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

**Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel**

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The consultant Arcadis was commissioned in 2020 to support the Mayoral Combined Authority / Local Enterprise Partnership and partners prepare a South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy. The Strategy would provide a single strategic integrated approach to delivering the Strategic Economic Plan's (SEP) ambitions for gigabit broadband services across South Yorkshire, providing the core digital infrastructure networks, including 5G connectivity, to enable greater business competitiveness, social inclusion and environmental sustainability.
- 1.2 This report presents the Final Draft Strategy which has been developed and recommended for approval by the Housing and Infrastructure Board, with a lead input provided by the Board's Co-Chair LEP representative. The Draft Strategy is presented to the LEP Board for consideration and endorsement.

## 2. Key Issues

- 2.1 This attached Digital Infrastructure Strategy is part of, and covers, one of three key areas of activity critical to providing a strategic approach to addressing the digital agenda across South Yorkshire in an integrated way to deliver the SEP's digital ambitions. The other two elements being digital skills and digital innovation and business support.
- 2.2 The SEP sets out a clear expectation of how digital will contribute to the wider economic and innovation objectives and sets the ambition for the region to "*..be recognised as one of the best-connected city regions in the country where coverage, choice, and speed of communication stays ahead of demand...Enhanced digital connectivity and skills enable people to use digital applications and solutions to improve their lives and to sustain, grow, and create new businesses*"
- 2.3 The Strategy provides the proposed strategic approach to accelerating the development of 'gigabit capable' digital infrastructure networks across the whole of South Yorkshire and includes proposals for public interventions support achieving this strategic ambition; building on the success of the existing Superfast South Yorkshire broadband programme which has achieved nearly 99% superfast broadband coverage.
- 2.4 There are a range of key challenges that the Strategy seeks to address including:
  - Around 160,000 premises in South Yorkshire (20% of total premises) are not scheduled to receive 'gigabit-capable' broadband by the industry over the next 5 years.
  - To build on the success of the Superfast South Yorkshire (SFSY) broadband programme in now rolling-out gigabit broadband connectivity throughout South Yorkshire.
  - A more consistent regional approach for 5G including ensuring local businesses are aware of and exploit 5G opportunities.

- Addressing digital poverty and the affordability of broadband services, which remain barriers to social and economic inclusion.

2.5 The Strategy will seek to put in place the digital infrastructure and connectivity 'foundations' to address the above challenges and support the digital inclusion, digital skills and digital business innovation agendas.

2.6 The attached presentation outlines the key elements of the Strategy.

### **3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

#### **3.1 Option 1**

To adopt the developed South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy, with strategic policy and delivery options considered through the preparation process.

#### **3.2 Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**

The key risks relate to the implementation of the Strategy as follows:

- Delivery partners are unable to commit to implementing the Strategy once completed. Collaborative working in the development stage of the strategy should mitigate this as controversial issues have been raised and responded to early, but the implementation of the strategy may carry additional risks, still to be considered.
- The digital 'Market' evolves so rapidly that the Strategy become outdated and irrelevant. Engaging a specialist digital consultant with 'Market' knowledge and experience has ensured the Strategy is up-to-date and 'future proofed.'
- Insufficient public and private funding and investment to implement the Strategy in a timely manner to meet the Strategy's delivery targets. A public funding source has been identified to support implementation of both the Strategy and the wider digital agenda and the MCA Executive and local authorities continue to liaise and support digital infrastructure providers in delivering their roll-out plans.

#### **3.3 Option 2**

To not adopt a South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy

#### **3.4 Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**

The key risk with this option is that there would continue to be no consistent approach adopted across South Yorkshire to address the digital infrastructure challenges and SEP digital ambitions over the next 5-10 years. There are limited mitigations for this option and therefore option 1 is being recommended.

#### **3.5 Recommended Option**

Option 1 is the preferred option to pursue.

### **4. Consultation on Proposal**

4.1 The Housing and Infrastructure Board has overseen the development of the draft Strategy, with the Superfast South Yorkshire Programme Board acting as an Advisory Group providing comments. Members of the LEP have provided a broader business input to its development.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision:**

5.1 The Draft Strategy is presented for the LEP Board's comments and endorsement.

**6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice**

6.1 There are no direct financial and procurement issues arising directly from this report. However, implementation of the Strategy will require financial and other resources, particularly within the MCA and local authorities, which have not yet been confirmed, although options are being explored.

**7. Legal Implications and Advice**

7.1 There are no direct legal issues arising from this report.

**8. Human Resources Implications and Advice**

8.1 Consideration will need to be given to the resources for implementing the Strategy, including the roles and resource requirements of the MCA.

**9. Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice**

9.1 Ensuring digital inclusion for all is a key purpose of the Draft Strategy, aligning with the intentions of the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty and the inclusivity policy approach of the Strategic Economic Plan.

**10. Climate Change Implications and Advice**

10.1 The Covid19 lockdown has shown the importance of good digital connectivity, particularly in relation to enabling people to effectively work from home, where possible, and access public health and other services online. A positive consequence of this has been a reduction in travelling and related pollution. Improved digital infrastructure / connectivity could therefore have a significant role in meeting net zero reduction targets related to transport.

**11. Information and Communication Technology Implications and Advice**

11.1 There are no IT issues as a direct result of this report.

**12. Communications and Marketing Implications and Advice.**

12.1 Once approved, it is intended for the final Strategy document to be published later in 2021 once desk-top publishing has been completed. There may be media opportunities as the interventions proposed in the Strategy are implemented.

**List of Appendices Included**

- A Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy
- B Draft South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy Summary Presentation