Housing and Infrastructure Board
07 December 2021

Draft Digital Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Plan

Is the paper exempt from the press and public?	No
Reason why exempt:	Not applicable
Purpose of this report:	Discussion
Is this a Key Decision?	No
Has it been included on the Forward Plan?	Not a Key Decision

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Executive Summary
Following recent discussions with HIB Board the final draft Delivery plan is now attached for Board consideration.

What does this mean for businesses, people and places in South Yorkshire?
The Strategy aims to help improve business productivity and competitiveness; address digital exclusion and digital poverty; and make South Yorkshire places more attractive to inward investors as digitally enabled places to live, work and invest.

Recommendations:
The Board is asked to:
- consider and comment on the draft Delivery Plan to implement the South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy.

- Note that the resourcing of the Delivery Plan by the MCA will be confirmed as part of the annual Business Planning and Budget setting process for 2022/23.

Consideration by any other Board, Committee, Assurance or Advisory Panel
N/A

1. Background

1.1 The South Yorkshire Digital Infrastructure Strategy was approved by the Mayoral Combined Authority on the 20 September 2021, alongside a request that the Housing and Infrastructure Board prepares a Delivery Plan.

1.2 Taking on board feedback from Housing and Infrastructure Board Members on the scope and content, a draft Delivery Plan to implement the Strategy has been prepared (attached at Appendix A). This provides background context, details of how the Strategy will be delivered including proposed actions and interventions, and how success will be measured. The Board's views are requested on these proposals to inform the finalisation of the Delivery Plan.

2. Key Issues

2.1 It is essential that the Delivery Plan sets out realistic and deliverable actions and interventions that can be properly resourced to ensure successful delivery of the Strategy. It is also critical that a co-ordinated approach is taken which ensures that activity is tied into the wider digital agenda; growing the digital skills of our residents and workforce; supporting business innovation and growth; and working to support and enable digital inclusion to widen participation and build capability for all.

2.2 There are a range of activities included in the draft Delivery Plan at Appendix A that set out to implement the Strategy and deliver the ambitions of the Strategic Economic Plan, some of which are already underway. Proposed priorities that are strategically important and/or need to be delivered in the short-term to deliver on the Strategy vision and goals are set out. Beyond this, actions are identified where resources could be deployed in the medium term.

2.3 The necessary resources will need to be secured to take forward implementation of the Strategy. Superfast South Yorkshire programme clawback offers a potential capital funding over the coming 5 years which could support most, but not all of these activities. Revenue funding will be required to deliver some actions set out in the Delivery Plan. Use of the clawback funds and other funding for implementing the Delivery Plan will need to be considered by the MCA as part of the usual MCA Business Planning and budget setting process for 2022/23. The opportunity for funding and other resource support from Partners also needs to be explored.

2.4 Specific costs for each action are not included in the Plan. Instead, each action has been given a Low, Medium or High category to indicate the likely range of costs. Further work will be required to understand the specific costs and other resources for each action. This process will be taken forward in parallel with finalising the Plan.

2.5 Following discussion today HIB Board will be asked to receive and approve the final Delivery Plan at the next Board meeting in January 2022.

3. Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

3.1 **Option 1**
To support the emerging Draft Delivery Plan and contribute to identifying key priority actions.

3.2 **Option 1 Risks and Mitigations**
- A key risk with this option would partners being unable to commit to implementing the Strategy. Collaborative working in the development of the Delivery Plan should mitigate this by identifying actions, priorities and resource implications. However, implementation of the Strategy may carry additional risks still to be considered as we progress.

- A further risk would occur if there was insufficient public and private investment to implement the Strategy in a timely manner to meet the delivery targets of the Strategy. SFSY clawback funding has been identified as a likely funding source to support implementation of both the Strategy and the wider digital agenda, but a budget will need to be confirmed following consideration by the MCA. Scenario planning will be undertaken in finalising the Delivery Plan to prepare for different levels of possible funding and resources.

3.3 **Option 2**
Not to support the production of a Delivery Plan.

3.4 **Option 2 Risks and Mitigations**
The key risk with this option is that it may delay the implementation of the Strategy and thus the ability to address the digital infrastructure challenges and SEP digital ambitions. This may lead to South Yorkshire falling behind other regions in digital infrastructure network investment, making the region and local businesses less competitive and exacerbating digital exclusion and digital poverty in South Yorkshire.

3.5 **Recommended Option**
Option 1 is the preferred option to pursue, reflecting the request by the MCA Board to prepare a Delivery Plan.

4. Consultation on Proposal
4.1 The Housing and Infrastructure Board is overseeing the preparation of the Delivery Plan, with the Superfast South Yorkshire Programme Board acting as an Advisory Group at key stages.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision
5.1 The views of the Board will inform the development of the draft Delivery Plan. It is intended for a revised final draft to be considered at the next Board meeting in January 2022.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications and Advice
6.1 Specific funding requirements are not currently set out in the Delivery Plan so 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 from the MCA and local authorities) which have not yet been confirmed. A more detailed understanding of costs will be obtained in finalising the

Plan, which will involve looking at scenario options and aligning with the outcomes of the MCAs business planning and budget setting process.

6.2   There is currently no discrete funding stream for Digital activity. However, it is expected that some clawback on the Superfast South Yorkshire programme will become available. At this stage it is not clear when this funding will become available nor the overall quantum. Funding that is received could be used to support capital expenditure.

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 be given to the resources for implementing the Strategy, including existing specialist expertise within the MCA/local authorities. The final Delivery Plan will provide further clarity on the funding available and other resources to deliver the proposed actions and interventions.

9.   Equality and Diversity Implications and Advice
9.1   Ensuring digital inclusion for all, is a key purpose of the 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.

10.   Climate Change Implications and Advice
10.1   The Covid19 lockdown periods have shown the importance of good digital connectivity, particularly in relation to enabling people to effectively work from home and access both public health and other services online. A positive consequence of this has been a reduction in travelling. Improved digital infrastructure / connectivity could therefore be an important contributor to 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   There may be media opportunities when the proposed interventions are being delivered.

List of Appendices Included
A   Digital Infrastructure Strategy Draft Delivery Plan

Background Papers
None