

<b>Board/Committee:</b>	Policy & Organisation Board
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Digital Strategy – Project delivery plan
<b>Author:</b>	Zoe White
<b>Status:</b>	For Decision

### **Purpose**

Gosport’s Government funded investment plan (UK Shared Prosperity Fund – UKSPF) provides opportunity to deliver digital inclusion projects and maximise the benefits of digital technologies. Digital interventions will be delivered against the three Government set priorities of Communities & Place, Supporting local Business and people & Skills.

This report seeks Council approval for delivery of the proposed project programme against the three Government priorities of Communities & Place, Supporting local Business and people & Skills.

### **Recommendation**

1. That Council approve the proposed delivery of projects against the three Government priorities, to be delivered by March 2025 in line with the UKSPF funding criteria.

#### **1.0 Background**

**1.1** The Gosport Infrastructure Investment Plan (2019), produced by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, identified telecommunications as one of the five priorities required to facilitate a step change in the Borough’s economy. In particular the roll out of next generation 5G mobile and ultrafast broadband connectivity would reinforce Gosport’s attractiveness as a business location, help diversify its existing business base and improve public sector delivery. It is also critical in developing the concept of Gosport being a ‘Digital Peninsula’ to help attract residents and businesses to the borough.

**1.2** A consultation took place in January 2023 to consult with partners on the draft digital strategy priorities to develop its detailed action plan. This consultation helped identify local needs and potential offers to address them under the umbrella of the proposed Gosport Digital Peninsula Partnership. It also helped inform the planning for the implementation of Gosport’s UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan.

**1.3** Digital inclusion is the cross-cutting theme for Gosport's UK Shared Prosperity Investment Plan (2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25) that addresses UKSPF Investment Priorities: Local Business; Community and Place; and People and Skills. Our plan was submitted to the Government for approval in August and an award for £1 million of additional funding was granted over the three year period.

**1.4** Our UK shared prosperity funding will be released across the three year period as follows:

Year 1 - £77,040

Year 2 - £142,599

Year 3 - £786,101

## **2.0 Report**

This report sets out an overview of the planned project proposals to be delivered against the UKSPF investment priorities and interventions.

### **2.1 Our digital vision**

Our aim is that Gosport's residents, businesses, organisations and groups will have access to the digital connection that they need, in terms of speed and capacity, both now and in the future. They will also have the skills and access to any support needed to utilise that digital connection for their benefit. Thereby making Gosport a better place to live and work.

**2.2** Our projects will be delivered against seven of the UKSPF interventions with specific funding amounts against each intervention. (As detailed in appendix A). There are 41 UKSPF interventions in total with 7 interventions chosen to reflect the delivery of Gosport's digital peninsula strategy.

### **2.3 UKSPF Interventions**

E4 - Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.

E6 - Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

E15 - Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community

facilities.

E17 - Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally.

E24 - Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

E36 - Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.

E41 - Funding to support local digital skills.

#### **2.4** Project Plan – Year one

Year one funding of £71,300.00 will be delivered against Intervention E15 - Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.

In view of the late decision and notification of the UKSPF award, approval from UKSPF has been granted to deliver the year one project in year two, to be completed by March 2024.

Our planned project for this period is a pilot training scheme offering 1-2-1 bespoke training and mentoring to address specific barriers to digital accessibility. Our planned outcome is to support residents through training to be digitally capable and enable our community to live independently, raise aspirations and empower our residents to manage their daily life.

Our pilot project will be commissioned by Gosport Borough Council (GBC) and delivered in GBC supported accommodation, where we (GBC) have identified specific digital support need for low income households, homeless customers living in temporary hostel accommodation and older persons living in sheltered and warden control accommodation.

#### **2.5** Project Plan – Year two

Year two funding of £142,599.00 will be delivered against Intervention E4 & E17:

E4 - Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.

E17 - Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally.

Our proposed project for delivery in year two consists of:

Intervention E4 – Project Proposal:

Our project proposal for E4 is an offer of Wi-Fi connectivity in and around the new bus interchange and High Street location with digital display boards to sign post and support the promotion of tourist attractions & cultural offer. Supporting visitors to digitally access attractions and further information, maps and walking routes before beginning their journey or when arriving in the town centre

**2.6** Intervention E17 – Project Proposal:

To support the visitor economy our project plan is supporting local attractions and amenities to develop digital marketing and promotional material, to boost business and economy.

To provide funded promotion of the digital content from our local attractions through the digital displays around the new bus interchange and ferry terminal. Promoting the visitor economy, local attractions, heritage sites, walking trail maps and tourist offers.

**2.7** Project Plan - Year Three

Year three funding of £786,101.00 will be delivered against the following Interventions:

E6 - Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities

E15 - Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.

E24 - Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

E36 - Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in-community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.

E41 - Funding to support local digital skills.

## **2.8** Intervention E6:

We recognise the support that is required to increase digital creative activities within local arts and our cultural and heritage locations. Our year 3 project proposal is a digital grant opportunity aimed at local attractions and amenities and Hampshire Cultural Trust to deliver digital programmes and boost their digital offer for creative activities.

## **2.9** Intervention E15:

Our year three proposal and investment for local communities consists of a grant scheme to provide investment and support for digital infrastructure. Funding projects with a digital theme and those providing digital facilities for the local community. A grant scheme could also be education focused by funding projects to purchase new types of digital equipment and the training and delivery of digital workshops for education and community purposes.

## **2.10** Intervention E24:

Supporting local business, economy growth and local enterprise can be supported by offering a digital grant scheme to provide work space for start-ups, incubator space for local enterprise and training spaces for services such as accounting, coaching and mentorship. Our project plan for intervention E24 also includes providing funding to Imagination refinery to continue the maker's guild and space in the High Street, supporting the High Street regeneration and for the Imagination Refinery to offer digital work space and training space within its establishment.

## **2.11** Intervention E36:

Our proposal for the E36 year three delivery is to procure a one year training delivery programme as a continuation of the pilot project CAG will

deliver from the year one UKSPF funding.

A training delivery programme will be similar to the pilot project in delivering bespoke 1-1 or group training to improve digital skills and increase levels of digital inclusion. This training will be open to a wider audience and aimed at improving skills to enhance employment opportunities, to be digitally confident and able and to support general digital skills required to enable our community to live independently, raise aspirations and empower our residents to manage their daily life.

An additional project proposal to run alongside the training delivery programme is a funding grant scheme. This grant scheme will be aimed at education providers, volunteer groups and support networks working across all ages to deliver digital interventions and in-community support to provide safety online resources and support.

#### **2.12 Intervention E41:**

To support local digital skills we would like to invite local education providers to apply for project funding. Project proposals will need to outline plans for delivery of digital skills education and training.

### **3.0 Risk Assessment**

#### **3.1 Procurement lead times need to be factored in to all planned projects, failure to allow sufficient time could jeopardise delivery and schedule of the projects.**

We have clear guidance on procurement lead times and can factor this into future project planning. Scheduled working group meetings will support regular progress checks and scheduling.

#### **3.2 UKSPF funding must be spent by March 2025 - Unspent funding must be returned and it will not be possible to extend project schedules.**

Year 2 & 3 project plans have been finalised and presented to P&O Board allowing sufficient time for approval. Early approval will enable adequate time for delivery to ensure the funding is spent in time.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

The report sets out proposals for the project delivery against the three investment priorities of the UKSPF funding.

Each of the seven interventions chosen to reflect the delivery of Gosport's

digital peninsula strategy have been considered to ensure that project proposals meet the requirements and can deliver the outcomes.

Our digital vision has been considered in each of the project proposals and referenced against the allocation of annual expenditure set by UKSPF.

Early approval of the digital project proposals will support the timescales for delivery and ensure that the funding opportunity is maximised with zero return of the central Government funding grant.

<b>Financial Services comments:</b>	<p>The Council has been awarded £1,005,740 from the governments UK Shared Prosperity Fund for projects that meet the UKSPF criteria and that the grant is spent by 31st March 2025.</p> <p>Keith Price Group Accountant</p>
<b>Legal Services comments:</b>	<p>As noted elsewhere in the report, the identified projects will need to be implemented in compliance with UKSPF criteria and conditions of grant.</p> <p>Legal Services can support as necessary in connection with the commissioning/procurement required for implementation of the proposed projects.</p> <p>Where the project involves a scheme for the award of grant funding to third parties, consideration will need to be given in due course to any subsidy control implications that may arise.</p>
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	<p>Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) for the related comments.</p> <p>An Integrated Impact Assessment was completed in September 2022 as an appendices to the September 2022 board report seeking approval for the strategy. We have updated this document to reflect feedback from the consultation completed in January 2023.</p>
<b>Climate Change implications:</b>	<p>Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) for the related comments.</p>

<b>Crime and Disorder:</b>	N/A
<b>Service Improvement Plan implications:</b>	The Council require the use and expertise of the Marketing team at Portsmouth City Council; to execute the marketing of grant funded project promotion. The Council will require additional resource to review grant applications and panel decisions.
<b>Corporate Plan:</b>	Our UKSPF digital project plan supports the Corporate Plan in the following ways: 1) Enhance the unique character, environment and assets of the borough and make it a great place to live and work. 2) Encourage investment, protect, and improve infrastructure and land use, creating jobs and generating wealth for residents 3) Promote tourism and heritage attractions, focusing on hidden gems 4) support new and small businesses
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Failure to align projects to investment priorities and interventions set by the UKSPF could create a financial risk of funding being withdrawn. There is a reputational risk if Gosport Borough Council are unable to deliver projects against specified requirements and a further risk of not being awarded future government funding grants.
<b>Background Papers:</b>	Gosport – the Digital Peninsula’ Digital Strategy for the Borough - Policy & Organisation Board report 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2022.
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Gosport – the Digital Peninsula’ Digital Strategy for the Borough - Policy & Organisation Board report 28 <sup>th</sup> September 2022. Appendix 2 – UKSPF Digital Strategy delivery Plan Appendix 3 – Digital Strategy & Project Delivery Plan IIA
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