

<b>Board/Committee:</b>	Policy & Organisation Board
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> November 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Digital Strategy – Project delivery plan
<b>Author:</b>	Economic Development & Regeneration Manager
<b>Status:</b>	For Decision

### **Purpose**

The Council’s Government funded Digital Strategy (UK Shared Prosperity Fund – UKSPF) seeks to deliver digital inclusion projects and maximise the benefits of digital technologies. Digital interventions are proposed to be delivered against the three Government set priorities of Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023, the Policy & Organisation Board approved the over-arching project programme. This report seeks approval for the proposed project plan & delivery timetable and asks the Board to note overall progress against the project programme.

### **Recommendation**

1. That the Board notes the progress of Year One delivery as set out in Section 2 of this report.
2. That the Board approves the Year Two project plans set out in Section 3, to be delivered by March 2024 in accordance with the UKSPF funding criteria.
3. That the Board approves the Year Three project plans set out in Section 4, in accordance with the UKSPF funding criteria.
4. That the Board approves the Year Three plan for one full time resource to be funded through UKSPF funding criteria set out in Section 5.

#### **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 and provides an opportunity to help address

the current levels of digital exclusion.

- 1.2 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 2022 and an award for £1 million of additional funding was granted over the three year period.
- 1.3 The Council's UKSPF funding will be released across the three year period as follows:  
Year 1 - £77,040  
Year 2 - £142,599  
Year 3 - £786,101
- 1.4 This report sets out the proposed project proposals to be delivered against the seven UKSPF interventions with specific funding amounts set against each intervention (as detailed in Appendix 1). Each intervention chosen will assist in delivering the Council's Digital Peninsula Strategy

## **Report**

### **2.0 Year One - Update on progress**

- 2.1 Year One funding of £71,300 is being delivered against Intervention E15 - *Investment and support for digital infrastructure for local community facilities.*
- 2.2 A pilot training scheme offering 1-2-1 bespoke training and mentoring to address specific barriers to digital accessibility started in July 2023. 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.
- 2.3 The pilot project has been commissioned by the Council and delivered in the Council's supported accommodation, where need for specific digital support has been identified for low income households, homeless customers living in temporary hostel accommodation and older persons living in sheltered and warden control accommodation.
- 2.4 We are now in month 5 of the pilot project which is proving to be very successful. A midway project review meeting was held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023, with our digital trainer providing updates on delivery progress.

During the first 5 months of the project 36 residents have received 1-1 digital training and support sessions with follow up training appointments (Appendix 2 details the intervention and support that has been provided).

2.5 Signposting and supporting with additional need has also been identified as a key outcome of the project delivery. Residents have been facilitated to claim fuel vouchers totalling £10,143, free SIM cards have been distributed with a value of £630 and links have been with the Willow Group, High Street banks and the Older Persons Forum.

2.6 Support that is most frequently requested is for access to GP's and online consultations, online banking and how to access it, setting up emails accounts, online shopping and getting online safely.

2.7 One barrier has been identified during the pilot project. Poor Wi-Fi connectivity and no Wi-Fi access in the communal areas of sheltered blocks and hostels. Our trainer is relying on 4G and signal strength to operate the devices that have been supplied with SIM cards. This has been reported to Housing Services for future proofing digital connectivity to our older persons and homeless customers.

### 3.0 Year Two – Project Progress

3.1 Year Two funding of £142,599.00 will be delivered against Interventions:

*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.*

#### Intervention E4 – Project update

3.2 **High Street Wi-Fi:** Our initial project proposal set out in the Policy & Organisation report 5<sup>th</sup> July 2023 (Appendix 3) includes securing Wi-Fi connectivity in and around the Transforming Cities Funded Interchange Project and High Street location. This project includes digital display boards to sign post and support the promotion of tourist attractions & cultural offer.

3.3 Due to the underground infrastructure in the High Street we have been advised that Toob will not be laying fibre cables into the High Street during their current delivery phase, therefore High Street connectivity is not a viable option at this current time.

- 3.4 **Transforming Cities Funded Interchange:** The Transforming Cities Funded Interchange did not include Wi-Fi connectivity and therefore had no plans for the infrastructure to be in place as part of the build plans. We have collaborated with Hampshire County Council (HCC), who have agreed to install the cable tubes for fibre connectivity into the new interchange for future proofing fibre install and digital connectivity with no funding requirement from UKSPF.
- 3.5 **Digital display boards:** HCC have agreed that the Council can use the digital displays to be provided within the new interchange for the promotion of heritage, culture and local attractions in the Borough. Digital displays will operate using sim card technology with ducting in place to support future fibre installation. Costs for the display boards have already been included in the interchange project and will be owned by HCC. UKSPF will fund the promotional campaigns being added to the displays at £45 per campaign change, total spend £180
- 3.6 This project will support the visitor economy and target passengers when beginning their journey or arriving in the town centre. Promotional campaigns will be planned by the Council for a 12 month period and updated quarterly by HCC.
- 3.7 **Digital Totems:** Installation of digital totems in key areas of the Borough offer flexibility in creating new opportunities for advertising, marketing and communication. Totems can offer the public engaging and personalised experiences, becoming real experiential marketing tools. Digital system can also be used for displaying routes on an interactive map and wayfinding which provides users with information and intuitive routes to reach their destinations. Outdoor totems are perfect for high footfall locations in outdoor environments.
- 3.8 Digital totems are equipped with management and monitoring software, which allow you to control the information displayed and collect data on visitors.
- 3.9 The project proposal is for the installation of 4 double-sided digital totems (including installation and maintenance costs) displaying current and fresh marketing material, wayfinding and walking routes to support local heritage, culture and tourism. Marketing of Gosport's attractions will reach a wide audience in high footfall areas with a visible QR code linking to the Discover Gosport website. This will allow visitors and the local community to continue exploring all that Gosport has to offer.

- 3.10 Digital totems also provide a revenue opportunity from paid advertising that could create the capital for additional digital totems and ongoing maintenance costs with an estimated income of £5000 per annum.
- 3.11 Suitable locations for digital totems will be dependent on feasibility of electrical supply to the totems, existing street furniture and planning consent. High footfall areas are essential to maximise visibility and marketing of Gosport's offers. Totems can also support the Town Centre regeneration and local shopping areas such as Stoke Road and Lee on the Solent High Street (See appendix 4 for examples).
- 3.12 Digital totem costs including supply, installation, programming, 3 year sim costs, VAT and 3 years of maintenance are estimated to be £30,000 per unit (approx.), with negotiation on costs available depending on the number purchased. It is proposed that the Council make an initial purchase of 4 totem units.

Intervention E17 – Project Update:

- 3.13 To support the visitor economy the project plan is supporting local attractions and amenities to develop digital marketing and promotional material, to boost business and economy.
- 3.14 The proposed plan includes the Council procuring a marketing professional to deliver videography, photography, digital art and promotional material across the seasons. This material will cover local tourism, heritage, culture, travel links, walking routes and places within the Borough to eat, drink and relax. All raw footage will belong to the Council and can be used by the Council and local businesses and attractions for advertising and marketing.
- 3.15 Content from this project will deliver the promotional campaigns at the bus interchange digital screens, Discover Gosport website and digital totem displays around the Borough.
- 3.16 Discover Gosport website requires a rebuild to enhance the visitor experience by making the website interactive, visibly interesting and exciting with regularly updated content. Currently 'Discover Gosport' has poor search engine visibility and doesn't support the digital progress needed for local heritage, culture and tourism. Our ambition is for digital displays around the Borough to have a QR code linked to the Discover Gosport Website, which will be a platform of information and event guides for Gosport's many attractions and interesting places to visit.

## 4.0 Year Three - Project progress

4.1 The 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.*

### Intervention E6 Project Update

4.2 Further project progress for E6 Year Three funding - *Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities*, will be finalised and presented back to the Policy & Organisation board in March 2024.

### Intervention E15 Project Update

4.3 It is proposed to use the revenue funding from the E15 intervention of £48,262, with funding from other interventions (E36 capital £20,000, E41 capital £20,000).

4.4 The Year Three proposal relating to the investment for local communities consists of a grant scheme to provide investment and support for digital infrastructure. Funding projects with a digital theme will be supported including those providing digital facilities for the local community.

4.5 The focus for this project delivery is to support Community Hub spaces in Elson, Lee on the Solent and the Town Centre (Town Centre digital and wellbeing hub - early project discussions in place with NHS and education partners). Grant funding will enable Community Hubs to be able to offer digital workspace, training space and a digital community facility with modern equipment and training support.

4.6 In-person visits have taken place at each community hub to discuss the

needs of the community, opportunities for each hub and potential outcomes. Each hub has identified a training and support need for basic online skills such as online safety, GP appointments, banking, benefits, letter writing, updating skills and job searches. There is a rising demand for this service, which often takes up a lot of volunteer time and in some cases volunteers themselves do not have the digital skills required to support.

- 4.7 In-person training is vital to support the skills of the community and the development of volunteers in a 'train the trainer' capacity, as well as future proofing ongoing digital support. Our recommendation is an extension of the current training provision being delivered by Citizens Advice Gosport, with delivery spread across the hubs.
- 4.8 Community hubs have also identified a need to provide digital access to enable connection with family and friends through video calls. There is an increasing demand for this service to support family connection, combat loneliness, and isolation. Community Hubs have seen an increase in use from Ukrainian and Afghan residents living in the Borough, where English is not the first language. Family connection through digital means has created a lifeline of support, helping to overcome the feeling of isolation and being able to verbally communicate. Having digital equipment in the hubs is also vital to support residents to develop their English language skills and community connection.
- 4.9 Each hub has identified a need for new and improved digital equipment and a dedicated workspace to host the digital hub and to be able to offer the support the community needs. In house Wi-Fi provision may also need to be enhanced to accommodate higher use.
- 4.10 Digital hubs will provide access to a number of resources including:
- GP access – online consultation
  - Banking
  - Shopping
  - Communication
  - Entertainment
  - Health Access
  - Information searches
  - Job Search
  - Learning and courses
  - Research
  - Citizens Advice Access & other support needs
  - Reading stories

- Letter writing
- Email set up and access

Support to report crime and complaints

4.11 Community hubs have identified valuable uses for the digital hubs and a programme of options that could be offered to residents:

- Access to online training courses
- Courses on safe use of internet
- Tutoring for individuals, small groups and classes on use of phones, I pads, tablets, lap tops and PCs
- Homework club with extended opening hours
- Dedicated times for older college / school students with extended hours
- Job club
- Adult literacy support
- Free access to Wi-Fi and PCs
- Gaming club for young people
- Study groups for people to practice new skills
- Parent & child sessions – interactive learning together and keeping children safe online.
- Bookable video call sessions

1-1 training sessions with Citizens Advice trainer

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#### Intervention E24: Project Update

4.12 • The early project plan to support local business, economic growth and local enterprise was to support through a digital grant scheme with additional support to provide work space for start-ups, incubator space for local enterprise and training spaces for services such as accounting, coaching and mentorship.

4.13 Grant schemes often provide quick funding opportunities for a specific task or equipment need but often don't support ongoing business growth and development. However it is now proposed to deliver a business support programme instead as set out below.

4.14 To support our Town Centre regeneration and to encourage business start-ups to build and stay in Gosport we need to provide a sustainable support package and expertise to develop growth.

4.15 The Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) plays an important role within the region, convening local partnerships between businesses, local authorities and academia to determine economic priorities.



- 4.16 Working in partnership with Solent LEP the revised project proposal is the delivery of the Digital Accelerator Programme (DAP) offering intensive digital support across three cohorts for a period of 12 months. DAP will broaden the knowledge of businesses on digital adoption to help productivity, growth and future proofing. A hybrid model will be delivered utilising technology to deliver 1 to1 sessions and also use local facilities in Gosport such as the Imagination Refinery on Gosport High Street to encourage the utilisation of existing resources.
- 4.17 This project will include 1 -to -1 virtual mentoring, progress tracking, impact assessments, online and face to face peer to peer meet ups and online or face to face webinars and masterclasses. All participants will have access to unlimited free support from the Solent LEP Growth Hub team throughout the programme, and once the programme is completed (See appendix 5 for DAP programme proposal).

#### Intervention E36: Project update

- 4.18 Our proposal for £25,000 revenue costs funded from E36 - Year Three delivery is to procure a 12 month extension of the one year pilot training being delivered by Citizens Advice Gosport.
- 4.19 An extended 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, enhancing employment opportunities, to be digitally confident, combat isolation and improving general digital skills. Training outcomes are focused on enabling our community to live independently, raise aspirations and feel empowered to manage their daily life.
- 4.20 Further project progress for the remainder of the E36 Year Three revenue budget will be finalised and presented back to the Policy & Organisation Board in March 2024.

#### Intervention E41

- 4.21 Further project progress for the remainder of the E41 Year Three revenue budget will be finalised and presented back to the Policy & Organisation Board in March 2024.

## **5.0 Additional resource requirements**

- 5.1 Additional resource will be required to deliver the marketing and digital support required for the promotion of heritage, culture and tourism in

Gosport and community digital delivery. Resource requirements include:

- Digital marketing support for heritage sites, tourism, local business and town centre regeneration.
- Supporting organisations to update their digital presence.
- Set up of digital totems and updating digital displays with promotional campaign material.
- Updating the Discover Gosport website with seasonal material and promotion campaigns.
- Creating a digital presence on social media to promote and share the digital projects.
- Monitoring grant applications and reporting (where applicable) for grant based project interventions.
- Marketing and digital support for community hubs to support digital launch, community offer and activities
- Marketing and communication support for the Imagination Refinery and future digital hub workspace.

5.2 It is proposed for the additional resource requirements is to create one full time post for a 12 – 15 month contract (depending on recruitment time scales). Resource costs will be secured from Year Three UKSPF revenue funding across Block 1 – Culture, Tourism & Leisure, Block 2 - Community and Block 3 – Training & Skills.

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5.3 Costs for 1FTE is estimated (depending on job evaluation) at Grade 8/9 - £35,000 - £45,000.

## **6.0 Risk Assessment**

6.1 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.

6.2 The Council 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.

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

6.4 Year 2 & 3 project plans were presented to P&O Board in July 2023 allowing sufficient time for approval. This report provides progress updates for further approval to allow adequate time for delivery to ensure the funding is spent before March 2025.

## 7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The report sets out Year One project delivery updates for noting against the Government investment priority Community and Place.
- 7.2 This report also sets out the proposals for approval of the Year Two and Year Three project delivery against the three Government set investment priorities of Communities & Place, Supporting local Business and People & Skills.
- 7.3 Each of the seven interventions have been chosen to reflect the delivery of Gosport's Digital Peninsula Strategy to ensure that project proposals meet the requirements and can deliver the outcomes.
- 7.4 The proposed digital vision has been considered in each of the project proposals and referenced against the allocation of annual expenditure set by UKSPF.
- 7.5 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 requires that the grant is spent by 31st March 2025.</p> <p>Are the costs of the totems to be met from the UKSPF and the ongoing maintenance from advertising? (Especially as 3 year costs may be outside the window of this fund).</p>
<b>Legal Services comments:</b>	Contained within the report
<b>Equality and Diversity:</b>	<p>Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 6) 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</p>

	have updated this document to reflect feedback from the consultation completed in January 2023.
<b>Climate Change implications:</b>	Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 6) for the related comments.
<b>Crime and Disorder:</b>	N/A
<b>Service Improvement Plan implications:</b>	The Council requires marketing expertise 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>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. UKSPF Digital Strategy delivery plan Solent LEP Digital Accelerator</li> <li>2. Year One project interventions and support</li> <li>3. Policy &amp; Organisation Board report 5th July 2023</li> <li>4. Digital totem outdoor installation example</li> <li>5. Solent LEP Digital Accelerator</li> </ol>

	<p>Programme</p> <p>6. Digital Strategy IIA</p> <p>7. Gosport Digital Peninsula Digital Strategy</p> <p>8. UKSPF Outputs &amp; Outcomes</p>
<p><b>Report Author/Lead Officer:</b></p>	<p>Zoe White – Project Manager</p> <p>Sarah Willett – Economic Development &amp; Regeneration Manager</p>