

Board/Committee:	Policy & Organisation Board
Date of meeting:	13 th March 2024
Title:	Digital Strategy – Project delivery plan
Author:	Economic Development & Regeneration Manager
Status:	For Decision

Purpose

In 2022, the Council received £1,005,740 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to deliver digital inclusion projects and maximise the benefits of digital technologies. As part of the digital strategy, digital interventions are proposed to be delivered against the three Government set priorities of Communities & Place, Supporting Local Business, and People & Skills.

On the 5th July 2023, the Policy & Organisation Board approved the over-arching project programme followed by approval of the proposed project plans & delivery timetable for Years One, Two and Three, in part, on the 29th November 2023. This report sets out the remaining Year Three proposed project plans.

Recommendation

1. That the Board approves the Year Three project plans set out in Section 2, in accordance with the UKSPF funding criteria.
2. That the Board gives delegated authority to the Economic Development & Regeneration Manager to determine the final detail and deliver the schemes in consultation with the Chief Executive.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Gosport Infrastructure Investment Plan (2019), prepared by Lichfields on behalf of 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 £1,005,740 of 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 and requires that the grant is spent by 31st March 2025. Payments for the first two years have been received:

Year 1 (April 2022 – March 2023) - £77,040

Year 2 (April 2023 – March 2024) - £142,599

Year 3 (April 2024 – March 2025) - £786,101

- 1.4 This report sets out the proposed project plans to be delivered in Year Three against UKSPF interventions E6, E36 and E41 with specific funding amounts set against each intervention (Appendix one). Each intervention chosen will assist in delivering the Council's Digital Peninsula Strategy.

Report

2.0 Year Three - Project plans

- 2.1 **E6** - *Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities (Estimated Value of project £70,000).*

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 (Estimated Value of project £100,000).*

E41 - *Funding to support local digital skills (Estimated Value of project £100,000).*

Intervention E6 Project Plan

- 2.2 The Heritage Curiosity Project in partnership with the University of Portsmouth will provide a digital heritage experience captured through a walking trail with digital interpretation. Visitors will immerse themselves in local heritage with QR codes linking to heritage content and historical images. Discover Gosport Website will store the archived material and provide links to heritage events and activities.
- 2.3 The experience and the interventions will support the existing offer (e.g. Heritage Open Day), develop new offers (e.g. Heritage – Community events that disseminate local heritage) and a Heritage Curiosity Experience (a new digital experience that helps a curiosity approach that

provides the visitor with a range of information when exploring Gosport's Heritage. This includes a range of methods for conveying historical information.

- 2.4 Examples of activities that the project could include:
- Co-design of heritage narratives and digital interventions
 - Heritage Walking interviews with local communities
 - Co-creation workshops with stakeholders and local initiatives
 - Co-creation workshops with local communities, creative & art practices, and traditional businesses
 - Testing pilot experiences and interventions with workshops participants and wider communities and groups
- 2.5 Participants from communities and traditional practices (art, creative, and businesses) will have the opportunity to explore new digital design methodologies, test outputs and contribute to their improvement. This will transfer knowledge about digital heritage from academia and integrate it into the community everyday life.
- 2.6 This community-led project and its activities will bring local values and pride to the surface in order to be discussed, performed and supported by the heritage owners (the communities). The project will support heritage outreach and foster community engagement with the project activities and outputs.

Intervention E36 Project Plan

- 2.7 This project will be delivered in partnership with the University of Portsmouth (UoP) and will focus on increasing digital inclusion and building essential digital skills to strengthen local business offers.
- 2.8 Local businesses, start-ups, students and young people will be invited to co-creation workshops through which the team will co-design a website template for the base of a business website
- 2.9 Using the developed template, training workshops will be offered with participants on how to curate and edit the website. Through these training session, participants will be producing a draft of their website which will be refined and finalised through one -to-one workshops.
- 2.10 Participants will be invited to business promotion and website development workshops in order to develop wider digital capacity in the town and support young stakeholders', employment or business development plans.

- 2.11 The workshops with businesses will equip them with an understanding of suitable marketing strategies and the digital skills to use in promoting their offer. The project will offer tangible outputs and legacy with participants creating websites that can be used and maintained moving forward with the digital skills they have developed.

Intervention E41

- 2.12 The project proposal for Intervention E41 is a partnership project with the University of Portsmouth (UoP) and Gosport schools, delivering a 'Space for All' digital programme.
- 2.13 This project will support the aims and objectives of the UK Space Agency's Inspiration Programme, teach digital skills to strengthen future career opportunities and aspirations, help to deliver growth and inspire our future space workforce
- 2.14 Space plays a critical role in our daily lives. Satellites orbiting the Earth keep us connected, support our defence and security, help us navigate, and monitor the climate and weather. The UK's space sector is a vital part of our economy, worth over £16.4 billion per year and employing over 45,000 people across the UK.
- 2.15 A skilled and diverse workforce is vital to the success of space businesses and the growth of the sector, and careers in space offer exciting and rewarding jobs for thousands. The UK has a growing pipeline of home grown talent supported by British universities with the University of Portsmouth being a Centre of Excellence.
- 2.16 HM Government national Space Strategy aims to partner with employers to help more young people gain access to work placements and apprenticeships in rewarding careers such as space engineering and space systems. Working with employers, training providers and local partners to promote quality training in the skills required by the space sector. These include not only technical skills, but also the business management skills that help turn science and technology into commercial advantage. Aiming to use the wonder of space to inspire the next generation into STEM careers, inviting space professionals to lead exciting activities and competitions in schools, from building satellites to designing space habitats.

3.0 Risk Assessment

- 3.1 UKSPF funding must be spent by March 2025 - Unspent funding must be returned and it will not be possible to extend project schedules
- 3.2 Scheduled project working group meetings will support regular progress checks and scheduling against all key project delivery milestones. Failure to allow sufficient time could jeopardise delivery schedule
- 3.3 This report provides project plans for Year Three delivery allowing sufficient time for approvals and adequate time for delivery to ensure the funding is spent before March 2025.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The report sets out Year Three project delivery plans for approval against the Government investment priorities E6: Culture, Tourism and leisure, E24: Business and E36: Training and Skills.
- 4.2 Each of the three 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.
- 4.3 The digital peninsula vision has been considered in each of the project proposals and referenced against the allocation of annual expenditure set by UKSPF.
- 4.4 Timely 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.

Financial Services comments:	Contained within the report.
Legal Services comments:	
Equality and Diversity:	Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 4) for the related comments. 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.
Climate Change implications:	Please see the Integrated Impact Assessment (Appendix 4) for the related comments.
Crime and Disorder:	N/A
Service Improvement Plan implications:	N/A
Corporate Plan:	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
Risk Assessment:	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.
Background Papers:	Gosport – the Digital Peninsula’ Digital Strategy for the Borough - Policy & Organisation Board report 28 th September 2022.
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding award – Breakdown of funds across interventions. 2. Policy & Organisation Board report 29th November 2023 3. HM Government space strategy: HM Government – National Space Strategy September 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk) 4. Digital Strategy IIA 5. Gosport – the Digital Peninsula’ Digital Strategy for the Borough
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