

# Briefing Note

**Title:** Digital Infrastructure Strategy

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**Date:** 17 July 2019

**Intended Audience:** Internal  Partner organisation  Public  Confidential

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## Purpose or recommendation

To review the draft Wolverhampton's Digital Infrastructure Strategy prior to it going forward to Cabinet on 5 September 2019.

## Overview

This briefing note presents the draft Digital Infrastructure Strategy for pre-decision Scrutiny.

## Background and context

Having future proofed digital infrastructure is crucial to making Wolverhampton a more attractive place to live, run a business and invest. Currently 97% of Wolverhampton is connected to superfast broadband (fibre to the cabinet and copper to the premise) but the future is full fibre. The Government has committed to full fibre coverage by 2033, however if the City of Wolverhampton is ahead of the game, this makes us more attractive for investment and supports economic growth. The benefits of full fibre broadband are significant: over 15 years, full fibre broadband in Wolverhampton would lead to £27million direct impact, £64 million business impact and £58 million of benefits to households (Economic Impact of full fibre infrastructure Regeneris January 2018).

5G is mobile internet as fast as fibre with speeds up to 1GB, five-ten times faster than current home broadband connectivity currently. 5G benefits include huge capacity with the ability to connect thousands of users and devices at the same time at consistently ultrafast speeds and ultra-reliable, secure and low latency (doesn't drop connections) which will be transformational for industry. Without intervention, deployment will be in phases with the ambition for the majority of the population to have 5G coverage by 2027, however Wolverhampton's involvement in the WMCA 5G project could enable us to be one of the first areas with 5G connectivity.

In recent correspondence to West Midlands local authority chief executives, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) recommended that local authorities should:

- Develop a Digital Infrastructure Strategy
- Identify a Digital Infrastructure Champion
- Make available your assets
- Work with the Code Operators to accelerate deployment whilst negotiating changes brought about by the Electronic Communications Code
- Ensure that planning policies support the Digital Infrastructure Strategy
- Coordinate Street Works effectively

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## Digital Infrastructure Strategy

Digital infrastructure is the backbone of a modern thriving economy driving up productivity and spreading growth and in delivering effective and efficient public services. The council has developed a detailed Digital Infrastructure Strategy and Programme centred around three themes:

**DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**

**FULL-FIBRE BROADBAND**

- Local full fibre network  
*Connecting public sector premises across Wolverhampton to a full fibre broadband network*
- Social housing fibre rollout  
*Through use of non-exclusive wayleaves to enable to rollout*
- Gigabit vouchers  
*£2,500 available to small and medium sized enterprises*

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**WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY**

- Smart infrastructure  
*Upgrading lampposts to run Smart technologies and facilitate the rollout of 5G small cell*
- WMCA Urban Connected Communities 5G  
*Facilitating the rollout of 5G across Wolverhampton including infrastructure acceleration and a testbed around construction*

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**CROSS CUTTING**

- Assets for technology  
*Addressing barriers and maximising use of our assets for technology*
- Growing Wolverhampton's digital economy, skills and inclusion  
*Maximising benefit from digital infrastructure to Wolverhampton's businesses and residents*

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**FULL FIBRE ROLLOUT** will be supported through the implementation of the DCMS funded Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) project which will connect public sector premises to full fibre broadband. Supporting the rollout of full fibre broadband across residential estates through the use of non-exclusive wayleave agreements (see assets for technology below). Lastly, we are promoting take-up of Gigabit Vouchers by businesses to enable full fibre to the premise through the Growth Hub and Enterprise teams.

**WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY** covers a wide range of technology including wireless technology on rooftop and high rise aerials, small cell technology and Wi-Fi meshes. Our European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) **Smart Infrastructure** project embeds smart enabled technology within street lighting including facilitating network capability including 5G. As part of WMCA **Urban Connected Communities (UCC) 5G** programme, Wolverhampton is to host the Black Country's first 5G testbed focusing initially around

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Construction with potential to develop into public service delivery use cases. In addition, we are working with Mobile Network Operators (MNO) to facilitate the rollout 5G through use of our assets and removing barriers.

A key requirement for enabling digital infrastructure rollout is to facilitate access to local authority owned assets and street furniture to support the rollout of digital infrastructure. Our **Assets for Technology** project aims to put systems in place to enable commercial rollout based on good practice guidance from [www.gov.uk/guidance/access-to-public-sector-assets](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/access-to-public-sector-assets) and removal of barriers. This will include identifying suitable assets that are viable for telecoms uses, agree a commercial model to facilitate the rollout and improving access arrangements including wayleaves and leases.

Progress towards implementing WMCA recommendations are set out below:

WMCA recommendations	
Develop a Digital Infrastructure Strategy	Attached
Identify a Digital Infrastructure Champion.	Digital Infrastructure Champion - Charlotte Johns, Head of Strategy Digital Infrastructure Co-ordinator – Heather Clark, Service Development Manager
Make available your assets	As part of Our Assets in the Corporate Plan, an Assets for Technology workstream has been established. Assets have been mapped in terms of their suitability for technology.
Work with the Code Operators to accelerate deployment whilst negotiating changes brought about by the Electronic Communications Code	Initial discussions are underway with Mobile Network Operator (MNO)s. The asset mapping will be shared with other MNOs and charging agreed in line with the code.
Ensure that planning policies support the Digital Infrastructure Strategy	Planning is represented on the Assets for Technology group. Joint work with WM5G Infrastructure Acceleration team is underway.
Coordinate Street Works effectively	Highways are represented on the Digital Programme Board and Assets for Technology workstream. Co-ordination of street works of the various activities could minimise impact and disruption.

A copy of the digital infrastructure strategy is included at appendix 1.