

Briefing Note

Title: Digital Wolverhampton Strategy consultation (pre-decision Scrutiny)

Date: 19 January 2022

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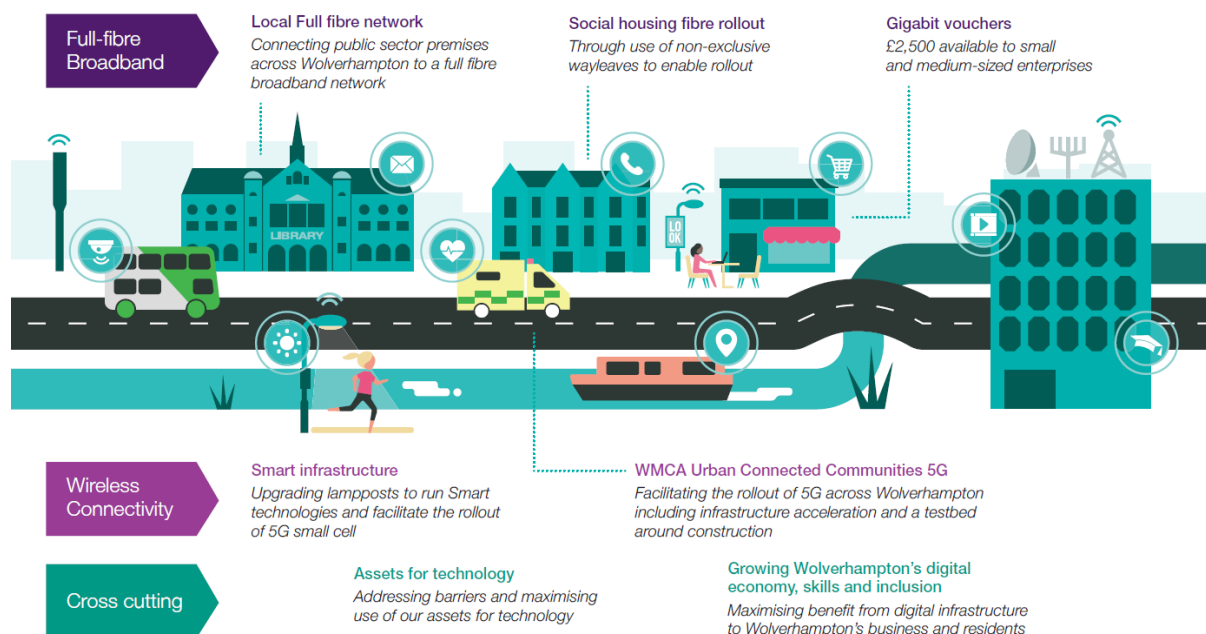
Intended Audience: Internal ☐ Partner organisation ☐ Public ☒ Confidential ☐

Purpose or recommendation

To invite pre-decision scrutiny on the draft Digital Wolverhampton Strategy, which will go to Cabinet on 23 March 2022.

Background and context

The Council adopted the Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy in January 2020. The strategy was centred around 3 key themes:



Significant progress has been made with the rollout of full fibre broadband underway across the city and 5G mobile rollout accelerated by at least 6 months. The Council has appointed a Cabinet Member for Digital City to drive forward this agenda supported by the Council's

Digital Champion and Co-ordinator. A Digital Wolverhampton Partnership has also been established comprising the key anchor institutions in the city: the Council, University of Wolverhampton, City of Wolverhampton College, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, Wolverhampton CCG and Wolverhampton Homes.

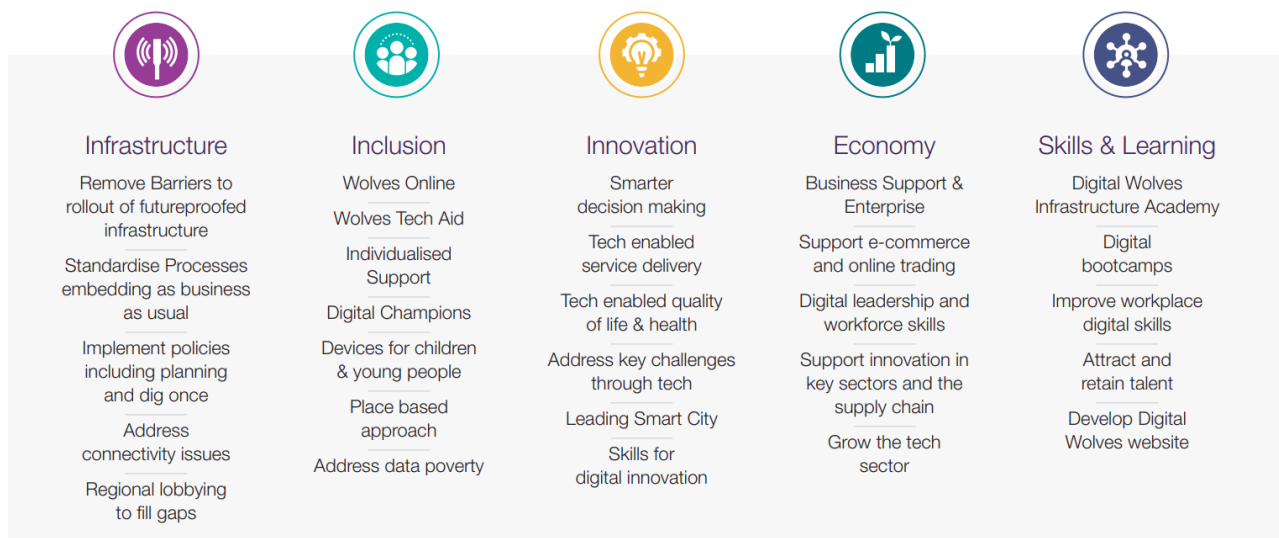
A wider Digital Wolves Strategy has been developed in order to build on this progress, reflect what has been learnt about the criticality of digital during the pandemic and to maximise benefit of digital to residents and businesses in the city.

Consultation Draft Digital Wolverhampton Strategy

The draft strategy has been developed through engagement with the Digital Wolverhampton Partnership, and sets out the vision and aims for digital in Wolverhampton and will act as a framework to update the city's current Digital Infrastructure Strategy. It will be delivered through a city partnership approach and includes three key ambitions.

- **Wolverhampton is a Gigabit and Smart City** – using futureproofed digital infrastructure, including full fibre broadband and 5G, to transform delivery of services and develop new applications to unlock the city's potential.
- **100% digitally included Wolverhampton** - ensuring all residents have the access to devices, connectivity and skills to take advantage of the benefits digital can bring.
- **Growing the digital economy and talent pipeline** - building on the city's futureproofed infrastructure to start and grow businesses, creating jobs for residents and meeting skills needs for the future.

To achieve these aims, the draft strategy focuses around five key themes:



The consultation opened in December 2021, and is open until 31 January 2022 accessible via [Digital Wolverhampton Draft Strategy - City of Wolverhampton Council - Citizen Space](#).

Whilst initial plans to hold more extensive face to face consultation events have been reviewed due to the current Covid situation, paper copies have been made available to customers via the Library Service.

Initial feedback received in the consultation so far includes:

- Support for the importance of digital for the city, as a key area for the future for both residents and businesses.
- The importance of digital in contributing to inclusivity and positive outcomes for local people.
- Health concerns of 5G: there is regular review of the evidence base around the risk of telecommunications. The Council regularly checks this with the national responsible agency, Public Health England (PHE), and there is no peer review published high quality evidence of any association between 5G and harmful health.
- Impact on delivery of services: digital improves choice in the delivery of services freeing up resources for face-to-face delivery for those that need it and has the potential of improving the efficiency of delivery of services themselves.
- Cost of delivery: the rollout of digital infrastructure is commercially funded with the Council as facilitator with costs covered by the Operators. The Council is investing in resources to get residents digitally included through Relight funding to ensure residents benefit fully from digital. Other aspects of the strategy will be funded through external funding and by ensuring residents and businesses fully benefit from funded activity such as Digital Bootcamps.

The outcome of the consultation including pre-decision scrutiny will be reflected in the final Digital Wolverhampton Strategy presented to Cabinet, and detailed action plans will sit underneath the key priorities to ensure delivery.

Appendix 1: Draft Digital Wolverhampton Strategy