

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 25 April 2019

Subject: Strategic Projects Services Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A. Lion

Recommending:

That the report of the Strategic Projects Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Digital Innovation

The council is committed to using digital innovation to help future proof local economic prosperity and enable new and innovative public services to be delivered more effectively and with added value for money. The West Essex and East Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone is being used to strengthen the areas ability to bid effectively for infrastructure investment from the public and private sectors. Details of key workstreams are set out below:

Enhancing health and care services through digital investment

A funding bid for £2.1m has been made to DCMS on the proposed Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) Ultrafast broadband service to GPs. This project will pilot the delivery of 1Gbit fibre broadband services to 113 GP's in Uttlesford, Harlow, Epping Forest, Broxbourne and East Herts Councils. This bid, managed by ECC, will enable GPs to take up faster speeds to support the delivery of health care services. Examples include local distributed services such as high quality scans, video triage, investigations and tests. This will support GP's in treating people in the local community or at home, reducing the need to travel to hospital.

Knowledge exchange and partner engagement

This is the fifth in the ongoing series of Smart Place Seminars to be held on Friday 26th April. 'Empowering Community and Voluntary Services Through Digital' will take place at Fletcher's Lea in Ware. It will feature a wide range of local and national speakers exploring how the voluntary and community sector can be enabled to use digital to achieve better outcomes for communities. Given the increasing role of community and voluntary groups in the provision of public services it is essential that there is clarity around what can and cannot be done through digital enablement.

Developing a joint, agreed long-term digital vision and programme for the West Essex & East Hertfordshire area

The Digital Innovation Strategy is now progressing through partner organisations' decision-making procedures to seek formal endorsement of the strategy. Presentations on the strategy have recently been delivered to Overview & Scrutiny meetings at both East Herts District Council and Broxbourne Borough Council. The strategy will be presented to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16th April for consideration.

The Herts & Essex Digital Innovation Strategy remains unique in that it seeks to bring together the aims and objectives of a wide range of partners from health, education, local government, business and the voluntary sectors and integrate these into a combined long-term plan. The DIZ is in discussion with major private sector organisations regarding sponsorship of the programme.

The DIZ has recently launched its website at www.diz.org.uk. Currently the website has details on the DIZ partners, the strategy, all the reports of the Smart Place Seminars and updates on some of the research undertaken through the group.

Building closer links with business investors

DIZ Board – In line with government digital policy developing a genuine public-private partnership on digital to align and coordinate investment, the DIZ Board has been joined by senior representatives of Stansted Airport, Places for People and CGI(Logica).

Putting customers and residents at the centre of DIZ plans

In order to pursue its role as a centre for innovation and to generate evidence to support future funding bids the DIZ is in discussion with leading market research companies on the development of the first UK local digital census. Initial proposals are being reviewed and discussions are ongoing with partners around funding.

Investing in Rural Communities

Following the award of £50m to the West Midlands Combined Authority to establish the Urban 5G Mobile Testbed. The DIZ has been working closely with other partners and central government to ensure it is in a position to bid effectively for the rural 5G mobile testbed programme. An announcement of this competitive process has been delayed but it is expected that the programme will get underway at the end of April. This could unlock potentially two grants of up to £25m to two areas in the United Kingdom to lead on the application of mobile technology on specific geographies. This will be an extremely competitive process but indications are that the DIZ remains the only cross-sector, cross-border partnership that may bid.

Accommodation Programme

The council is looking at how its office accommodation can be upgraded to provide modern and effective working environments that will transform public service delivery and productivity, and support high street footfall and deliver other economic benefits.

The officer working group meets monthly under the leadership of the Chief Executive. Detailed plans are being brought forward and assessed, and financial modelling and costings confirmed around relocations of back office district council functions off site, rationalising the footfall of the existing civic centre and delivery of resident units in the site to fund build costs elsewhere. A series of positive meetings have been undertaken with potential new tenants of the Civic offices in Epping, to create a genuine public service hub, where residents can get a wide range of service needs met in one place. There is potential for the establishment of a business incubation hub on the top floor. In addition, interest has been identified for providing a food and beverage offer that would provide services to the buildings tenants and customers but also provide facilities for wider use by the public. These fit with the councils aims to support local businesses and create more efficient, more easily accessible integrated public services and maintain the footfall and extend the high street. Work is ongoing and will, continue to be reported regularly to members.

Partnership Working

Councillor A Lion has replaced Councillor G Mohindra as Chairman of the One Epping Forest Partnership. The Executive Board is made up of senior leaders from key public service providers locally. The Partnership has recently been joined by Princess Alexandra Hospital, and Essex Partnership University Trust. The other board members are the West Essex CCG, New City College, the Corporation of London and Vibrant Partnerships. Each member pays an annual subscription to enable a joint fund to pump prime projects which aim to 'deliver public services better together'. Currently the partnership is supporting the work of the Epping Forest Tourism and Visitor Board, including the new cross border tourism group, The Health and Wellbeing Board, the Green Arc project, the soon to be relaunched Skills Board and the DIZ..

These working groups activities reflect the councils economic social and environmental priorities. The partnership will be presenting to a upcoming meeting of Overview & Scrutiny Committee on its work programme following a review of its priorities, funding and approach.

LSCC

The council continues to play an active role on both the LSCC and SELEP. The April LSCC board meeting received a presentation on the digital work being led by the council and requesting that LSCC's strategic plans are amended to support investment in the area. Members are also working closely with colleagues in the other neighbouring councils between London and Cambridge to develop more joined up working on a range of priority issues identified in the council's strategic plans.