

**West of England Local Enterprise Partnership
Board meeting – Monday 6 March 2023**

West of England Digital Plan

Purpose of the report

- To obtain feedback on draft West of England Digital Plan (copy attached).

Recommendation

- LEP Board members to provide feedback on the draft Digital Plan and to consider how members may be able to play a role in supporting delivery of the Plan.

Background

1. Issue(s) – Acceleration of Place-based Digital Transformation

The Combined Authority and the West of England LEP agreed to fund a programme to accelerate place-based digital transformation and develop digital strategy for the region. The programme commenced April 2021.

The draft Digital Plan has been developed with specialise technical support, and extensive engagement with stakeholders across the region. Representatives from each of the four West of England Authorities along with university, business and third sector stakeholders have been involved through a series of development workshops held June-September 2022. The groups covered: evidence of regional needs/priorities and good practice; mapping of existing digital initiatives; identification of key strengths, opportunities, threats and weaknesses that a regional digital strategy should address; priority focus areas, outcomes and activities; and a review the proposed delivery framework.

2. Proposal/Solution – West of England Digital Plan

The draft plan sets out our collective ambition for the region, key strengths and assets, our priorities and a delivery framework detailing planned activities. It covers the West of England LEP area comprising the West of England Combined Authority (Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, South Gloucestershire) and North Somerset. It aims to build on the digital strengths of the region, setting out shared ambitions that cement our standing as a global centre of digital innovation excellence and ensure our digital transformation is ethical, fair and sustainable.

The plan includes our ambitions to extend levels of connectivity in the region, as well as five additional priority areas:

- **Digital Leadership** – The region demonstrates visionary, proactive leadership which provides confidence to partners and encourages collaboration and delivery partnerships
- **Digital Infrastructure** – The region is digitally connected, with access to world-class digital infrastructure that is fast, secure and reliable
- **Digital Inclusion and Skills** – Our people and businesses can get online and use digital services and our economy has the skills required for digital transformation at all levels

- **Digital Growth** – Our businesses and third sector organisations are digitally capable and can maximise digital opportunities
- **Digital Public Services** – The region delivers best in class digital public services to provide a better experience for residents
- **Tech for Good** – Harness our digital innovation ecosystem to address key regional and global challenges

The delivery framework for each priority area articulates why the priority is important to us; where we are now; what we aim to achieve; what we will focus on to achieve the aims; and what actions the Combined Authority and its partners, including Local Authorities will take to deliver. This information will underpin the detailed implementation plan for 23/24 and beyond.

Delivery of the Digital Plan will require collaboration across the Local Authorities within the LEP area as well as with the business community and other stakeholders.

3. Request of the LEP Board

The LEP Board is asked to consider the draft digital plan and provide feedback and views. In addition, the members of the LEP Board are asked to consider how they may be able to support the delivery of the plan and whether / how they would like to be involved in the development of the action plan as the next phase of this work.

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