

Report of the Director of City Development and the Chief Information Officer

Report to Scrutiny Board (City Development)

Date: 18 November 2015

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into Digital Inclusion – Session 2

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

To provide Scrutiny Board (City Development) with the information required to undertake the second session of the inquiry into digital inclusion.

The report responds to areas of interest raised by the Scrutiny Board at the 14th of October meeting and continues to explore the city's digital infrastructure, the gap between those who are digitally engaged and those who are not, the reasons why this may be the case, and the impact this has and then discusses opportunities for digital inclusion.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Board is requested:

- a) to note the contents of this report
- b) make recommendations as deemed appropriate

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Board (City Development) with the information required to undertake the second session of the inquiry into digital inclusion.
- 1.2 The report responds to areas of interest raised by the Scrutiny Board at the 14th of October meeting and continues to explore the city's digital infrastructure, the gap between those who are digitally engaged and those who are not, the reasons why this may be the case, and the impact this has and then discusses opportunities for digital inclusion.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Board agreed the terms of reference of the 9th of September and the first session of the inquiry was on the 14th of October. This first session provided the Scrutiny Board with an overview about the objectives to be achieved and our aspirations as a local authority.
- 2.2 At the first session the Scrutiny Board was provided with an overview of the two main elements to digital inclusion, firstly the people who use digital services – having the skills, motivation and confidence to engage digitally, and secondly the infrastructure – is there an appropriate network/broadband service for them to connect to. The Board requested further information during the debate which is referred to in this report.
- 2.3 The key areas of focus for the session are as follows:
 - Smart Cities Digital Literacy Project
 - To provide requested information to promote further understanding of the infrastructure across Leeds including access to digital and online services in council buildings. To understand how we could identify what support is being provided in Leeds by all sectors including the Council and explore the benefits of this.
- 2.4 At the December meeting the Scrutiny Board will focus on the strategy going forward and supporting individuals and communities.

3 Main issues

3.1 Smart Cities

- 3.1.1 The Chief Information Officer, Dylan Roberts, will be presenting the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the Smart Cities work, its benefits and a particular focus on the critical importance of digital literacy.
- 3.1.2 Leeds has established a Smart Cities Steering Group chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and involving officers from across the Council, representing Economic Development, Adult Social Care, Public Health, ICT, Policy and Intelligence, as well as the Library and Information Service.
- 3.1.3 Attached as appendix 1 is an example of some of the smart cities work in Leeds which relates to "Leeds being the Best Place to Grow Old In"

3.1.4 For the Smart Cities agenda to benefit all depends on the confidence and ability of citizens and businesses embrace and make use of technologies within their everyday lives. Not being digitally literate will be equivalent to not being able to read and write. Within the framework of the Smart Cities Steering Group the Library and Information Service is leading on the 'people' element with a project brief focussing on Digital Literacy for Citizens and Businesses.

3.1.5 The objective of this project is to ensure that:

- There is an understanding of the digital needs of citizens, communities and business staff.
- To develop a strategic options appraisal and business case for how the Council might take a leadership role to ensure that citizens, communities, and businesses in most need are afforded the opportunity to participate in the digital world.

3.1.6 The proposed scope of this project is to:

- Determine the digital skills which are required for citizens, communities, and business staff in the Smart City context.
- Determine the training courses, tools, strategies and other resources available in Leeds and nationally that would be of benefit to address this skills gap.
- Identify the gaps between the baseline position and the skills required.
- Determine the approach and framework for closing the gap.
- Develop an engagement strategy to give awareness of these resources to the groups above.
- Determine take up via training sessions offered and amount of signposting.
- Co-ordination and communication of digital skills training and learning opportunities across the region.

3.1.7 No funding or resources have been identified to deliver this aspiration and a business case will be drawn up for this.

3.1.8 There are clear parallels between the aims of the Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff project and those of this Scrutiny Board.

3.2 Identifying where support is needed.

3.2.1 There is compelling evidence that says that being digitally literate and included can significantly increase your life chances, in terms of health and wellbeing, getting a job and in tackling isolation and other challenges around social exclusion. Those most likely to be excluded digitally are also those most at risk from exclusion in other, and often multiple, areas, e.g. age, disability or income. The question arises about how and where should we focus support; could this be focused on super output areas or on communities with high levels of local deprivation, high unemployment, and above average welfare claimants? This is information that we already know, in addition to JSNA information (which highlights health needs) and could be a practical starting point to any future business case.

3.2.2 In June 2014 Leeds City Council published 'Get online in Leeds', copy attached at appendix 2. This was a guide to free services for getting online and accessing

basic ICT training. The document requires updating, including reference to where free wi-fi is available, and should then be published in a sustainable way allowing information to remain current. This, and other opportunities for improving the awareness of available training and ICT access, fall within the scope of the Smart Cities - Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff project and will be completed through partnership between Library and Information Services and Citizens and Communities during 2015/16.

3.2.3 Other examples being investigated are the options for searching for ICT/digital training opportunities by skill and/or postcode. To stay current this would most likely be an online resource however support to customers not yet online would be delivered through staff at sites, such as libraries and community hubs, accessing this information and referring the customer to a suitable training pathway.

3.3 Leeds Landscape - Connectivity and infrastructure across Leeds and the Provision of Support to Promote Digital Inclusion.

3.3.1 At the last inquiry session the Scrutiny Board considered digital inclusion in its widest context and the infrastructure position. It was acknowledged that where connectivity options are limited and/or deemed to be (prohibitively) expensive there can be a negative impact in digital inclusion terms. Access to good quality connectivity is recognised as an important driver of social inclusion and a key determinant of economic development.

3.3.2 At the last inquiry session the Board were presented with maps showing national statistics relating to internet usage. The national statistics were applied to Leeds population. The Board were advised that at this present time work is being undertaken to identify a more accurate picture of local usage of the internet and the means by which people are connecting.

3.3.3 The Board were interested in finding out more about access. As the Board discussed getting a comprehensive view of all the factors relating to access can be complex. Those individuals that do go 'online' may do so by a number of means – they may use their smartphone or tablet to access some content. Some users may have internet connected televisions which rely on either a traditional broadband connection or mobile connection to the internet. Many users will have fixed line connectivity (through a phone line into their home or business premises) but others may solely use 'data' provision within their mobile phone contract. There is variation in the reliability of mobile connectivity for example some people find that they have very poor coverage inside their home.

3.3.4 The Board requested some further information about the current position with broadband infrastructure across the city. To this end maps are appended to this report which show the extent of the publicly funded broadband infrastructure activity across the district.

3.3.5 There are three maps (appendix 3), one of the Leeds city area, one of the Leeds City Council geography and one showing the whole of the Phase 2 project area of West Yorkshire and York. The three maps illustrate by postcode;

- those areas to which superfast broadband was made available via the West Yorkshire Local Broadband Project, 2013-15 (in green hashes)

- those areas which will be included in the Phase 2 West Yorkshire and York (WY&Y) Broadband Programme, 2015-18 (in blue)

- 3.3.6 There are large areas of the maps where there has been no publicly funded activity. These are areas where commercial activity has delivered superfast broadband connectivity. Coverage for superfast broadband for the Leeds MD stood at 90.7% of premises prior to the commencement of the publicly funded infrastructure build. By the end of the BDUK programmes Leeds coverage for superfast should stand at 97.5%.
- 3.3.7 As noted in the previous report (and in the response to DCMS Select Committee) there are limitations associated with using broad coverage statistics to demonstrate success. The position for individual premises and groups of premises can be obscured. However, it is true to say that even prior to the commencement of the Phase I publicly funded programme Leeds MD had relatively good levels of superfast coverage. By the end of the programme superfast connectivity will be an option for many more residential and business users across the district.
- 3.3.8 What the maps do not show is the extent of either the BT or Virgin commercial rollouts. This information, up until very recently, has been company confidential. However BT data has recently been released to the Programme Management team and is currently being mapped.
- 3.3.9 The maps also do not show any coverage by local wireless providers (e.g. AQL, LN Comms) or mobile coverage. The West Yorkshire & York Programme Management team do not have this information.
- 3.3.10 Supplementary information was provided to the Scrutiny Board which highlighted that the 27th July 2015 The Department of Culture Media and Sport select committee announced their intention to undertake an inquiry into 'Establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK' and invited written submissions. The West Yorkshire Combined Authority provided a written response on the 30th of September which the authority has kindly agreed to share with the Scrutiny Board. The response details a number of recommendations and action points with regard to the region and more specifically Leeds. The Board specified that it would like a further opportunity to discuss this at the November meeting therefore the terms of reference and the WYCA response are attached as appendix 4.

3.4 Leeds is the Best City for Wifi

- 3.4.1 As ownership and use of mobile devices increases there is an expectation to be able to access wifi in both indoor and outdoor environments. Over the last 18 months Leeds City Council has been actively engaged in a programme of activity to roll out extensive free public wifi provision.
- 3.4.2 Free to access public wifi is now available in 106 public buildings owned and maintained by Leeds City Council. The buildings included in the programme include local libraries, leisure centres, community centres, one-stops and children's centres, museums and visitor attractions. The provision is made in public indoor areas of the buildings concerned although in some cases the provision is able to be accessed from outside the building. A full list is included at appendix 5.

- 3.4.3 Free public wifi is also available on Millennium Square and the pedestrianised area of Briggate.
- 3.4.4 The council is working on a pilot project with a number of wireless broadband providers (who are primarily engaged in the business broadband market) to develop a pilot project which will allow providers to use roof space on LCC owned residential towerblocks to build wireless broadband networks. As part of the permission to occupy the roof spaces providers will be asked to provide a free residential wifi service to residents living within the towerblocks. This pilot project will allow LCC to establish some baseline information about the type of connectivity residents in the blocks concerned are already using as well as takeup and usage of the free wifi once available. The first of these buildings is due to go live with a wifi service for residents at the end of November.
- 3.4.5 To extend provision of free public wifi further across the district the council has awarded a concession contract to a local internet company aql which allows them to access LCC assets such as lamp posts, street furniture etc. in order to develop free public wifi networks. The concession agreement with aql will widen access to free public wifi across more areas of the city, allowing more people the potential to access free connectivity using their own devices. Dr Adam Beaumont the Chief Executive of aql will be attending the meeting on the 18th of November to provide further information about the work of aql and the benefits of free public wifi.
- 3.4.6 The Council will continue to explore how LCC assets can be used in order to extend connectivity options throughout the district. Other local authorities are making creative use of concession contracts in order to secure additional services for tenants and residents in their areas. Forthcoming schemes in Leeds such as the District Heating Scheme potentially provide an opportunity to extend fibre networks as part of the building work associated with the project.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation has been undertaken between officers across City Development, including Libraries and Economic Development, Citizens and Communities, and Strategy and Resources. Further research has been carried out including a review of Office of National Statistics and Tinder Foundation data relating to digital take up. Further consultation will involve other stakeholders and partners as the Smart Cities' project Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff develops.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 An equality and impact assessment has not been completed at this stage, however, national evidence suggests that older people, those on low incomes, those with low educational attainment and people with disabilities are most likely to be excluded from digital activity
- 4.2.2 An equality and impact assessment will be completed as part of the Smart Cities project Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff to ensure that these national and any locally determined issues and appropriate actions are identified.
- 4.2.3 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.

4.2.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 Support for digital inclusion across the city contributes to the Strategic Objectives of :

- supporting communities and tackling poverty
- promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- delivering the better lives programme
- becoming a more efficient and enterprising council

4.3.2 and link strongly to the Best City Outcomes of:

- Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
- Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life
- Earn enough to support themselves and their families
- Enjoy greater access to green space, leisure and the arts

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Improvements to digital infrastructure, communications systems and transactions, as well as ensuring that the city's citizens have the skills to utilise them, will help ensure greater efficiencies.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 None.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 None.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Digital literacy is, or if not will soon be, as important as reading and writing. Not being able to interact with devices, transact, communicate, work and inform yourself through digital means will result in significant disadvantage and possible exclusion. For Leeds to be the Best City all need to be digitally literate starting with the people most in need.

5.2 Work is already being undertaken within Leeds to deliver improved digital literacy but it is recognised that the offer requires greater cohesion, collaboration and promotion to reduce the literacy gap and for Leeds to become the Best City for Digital. This inevitably would require greater investment. These aspirations will progress under the umbrella of the Smart Cities programme.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Scrutiny Board is requested to:

- a) note the contents of this report.
- b) make recommendations as deemed appropriate

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.