

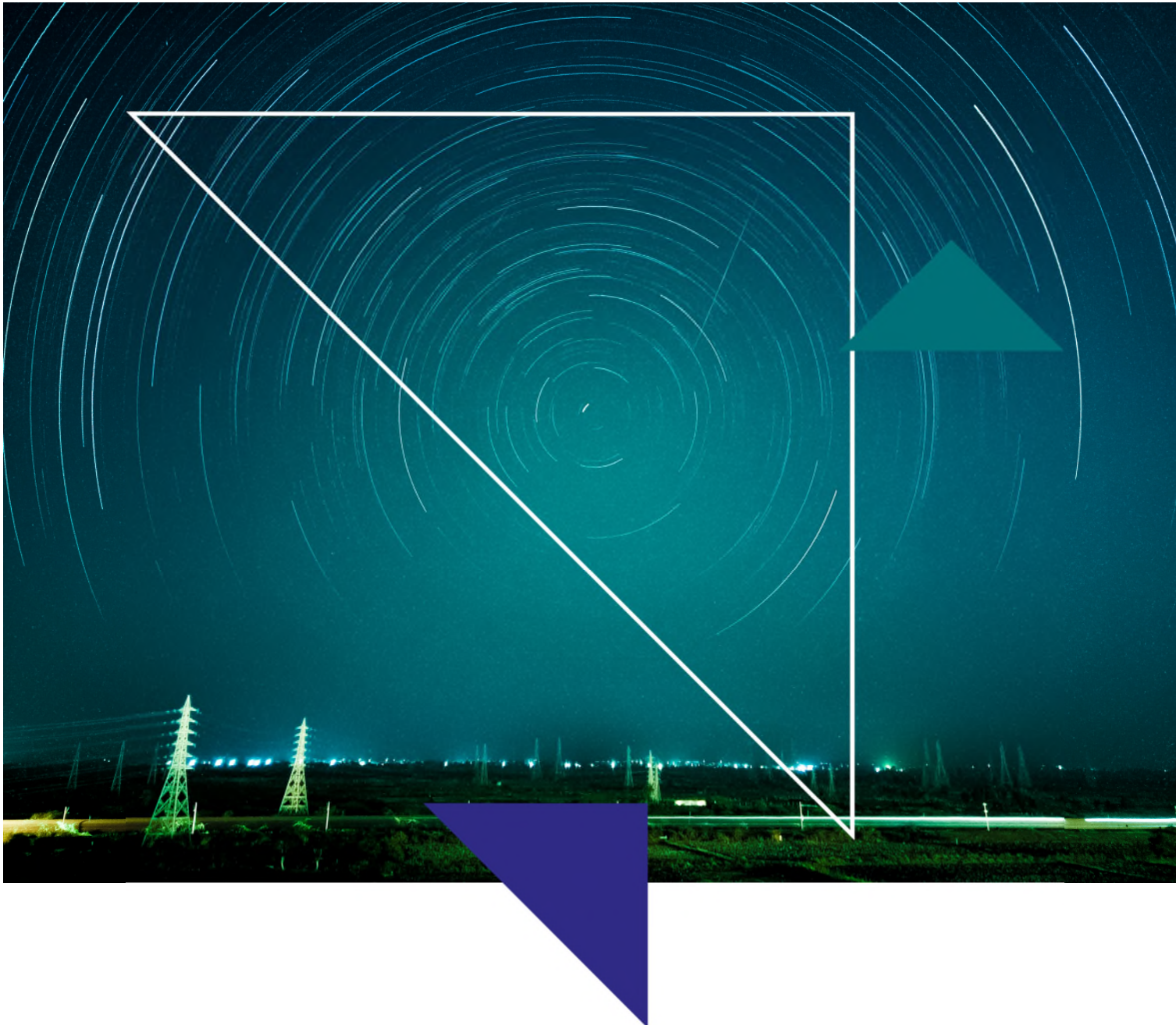


APPENDIX 1

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Towards Digital Growth – draft framework and priorities for Hertfordshire

June 2021



DRAFT



Executive Report

This paper sets out a framework to accelerate the provision and utilisation of digital technologies in Hertfordshire as part of a suite of activity to achieve responsible growth for its businesses and communities and fast-track recovery from COVID-19.

1. Context

This report aims to build upon the considerable success of Connected Counties in driving superfast broadband investment and uptake across the county (*level of superfast coverage 24Mb plus 98.46% and an uptake of 79%: figures based on Think Broadband and Ofcom data*). In so doing, it sets out a role for Hertfordshire Growth Board in realising a full fibre vision for Hertfordshire, its communities and businesses, aligned to the Government's gigabit and full fibre infrastructure aspirations.

This vision is real and tangible and will stimulate private sector investment, be a key enabler in driving economic recovery and support the future well-being of its residents. The role of digital technologies in all aspects of our lives has become increasingly important, and has the potential to radically change our expectations and requirements in the future.

With full fibre now a key Government aspiration, it is important to ask why gigabit and why fibre? The Government's target is that at least 85% of UK premises will have access to gigabit-capable broadband by 2025 and will "seek to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100% as possible". This target, announced in November 2020, was scaled down from its previous ambition to deliver nationwide gigabit broadband coverage by 2025. In terms of the definition of gigabit-capable broadband, this means a network which can deliver download speeds of at least 1 gigabit-per-second (1 Gbps or 1000 megabits per second, Mbps). To put this into context, a 1 Gbps download speed would allow a high-definition film to be downloaded in under one minute.

Gigabit-capable broadband will be delivered by a range of technologies including full-fibre connections (FFTP – Full Fibre to the Premises) which is viewed at this stage as the preferred option and is attracting the most commercial

investment, high-speed cable broadband (Virgin Media) and potentially future 5G networks.

While the UK currently has a high level of availability of superfast broadband (download speeds of 30 Mbps) and superfast broadband, which is available to 95% of UK properties according to Ofcom, the UK's telecommunications regulator. Superfast broadband has been mainly delivered by Fibre-to-the-Cabinet (FTTC) technology, which is a part-fibre, part-copper technology.

Whilst superfast broadband is fast enough for most current individual/household needs, the availability of and demand for data-intensive services such as online video streaming and video calls is increasing. High data demands by many users at one time can push the limits of a superfast broadband connection. To support this growing dependence on and demand for digital services, it is becoming increasingly evident that high capacity internet connections that can support fast download speeds, large amounts of data and many users at one time will be required. The pandemic has further highlighted the need for widely available and reliable digital connectivity.

In July 2018, the National Infrastructure Commission concluded it was uncertain if and when the demand for data would outstrip existing networks but said that a decision to invest in full-fibre networks, compared to upgrading the existing copper network, was a "risk worth taking" to avoid the potential consequences of not having the right digital infrastructure in place to support future needs.

Since 2018 and accelerated by the impact of COVID-19, the importance of high capacity internet connections, whether in the home or office, is starting to place an even greater emphasis on the availability of FFTP. This has been particularly evident not only in changes to



domestic use with the additional demands of home working, but also to strategic planning around the way we will work, move around, shop and spend our leisure time in the future.

Hertfordshire's needs to be prepared if it is to influence policy at a regional and national level rather than play catch up.

While realising such a vision will be multi-faceted, including promoting a 'telecom friendly' planning policy and attracting private sector investment, this report recognises that one of the key and immediate priorities will be access to fibre connectivity.

In addition, while significant investment in telecom infrastructure has already been secured, the current level of full fibre infrastructure to the premises currently remains below the national average with (Hertfordshire 7.99%, compared to 17.39%). This lower level of investment is a matter of concern and could be a potential barrier for future growth.

2. Purpose

It is with this background that Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) working in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council has undertaken this initial exercise to address the following key questions and issues. These are:

- To understand the current digital landscape in respect to the current levels of full fibre/gigabit and mobile coverage within the county;
- To understand the future plans of the telecom sector to invest in Hertfordshire;
- To compare Hertfordshire with its local authority neighbours surrounding London;
- To understand the market's current interest in Hertfordshire and the extent of any interest;
- To ascertain how Hertfordshire is perceived by the telecom sector; do its policies attract or discourage investment?
- To ascertain what role the public and private sectors can play in attracting further investment.

As part of this digital landscaping an extensive market engagement exercise was undertaken, and this report would wish to extend its thanks to all the carriers, infrastructure companies, services providers and mobile operators who contributed their insight and observations. Their insight was invaluable and contributed significantly to the outlined workstreams and recommendations.

Whilst a number of very meritable schemes, including digital-related planning initiatives, digital pilots and the deployment of a LoRaWAN network (network to support the delivery of the Internet of Things) have been progressed by individual local authorities, this report believes that there is a fundamental need to consider and implement a wider enablement strategy which would have the scale and scope to transform connectivity within the county and help to drive its full-fibre aspiration in a tangible and sustainable way.



This report sets out how, via Hertfordshire Growth Board, a series of workstreams can be set up to implement a series of recommendations, which with sponsorship, would drive economic recovery and realise considerable social benefit for our communities.

Hertfordshire Growth Board was conceived in 2018 as a collective response to managing the scale and pace of growth required over the next decade. The Board is made up of Hertfordshire's 10 district and borough councils, Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Together they are committed to working together to deliver an ambitious growth agenda to support a thriving economy, with affordable housing, a sustainable transport network, excellent schools and healthcare facilities. Through its membership and wider stakeholder community, the Growth Board could and should have a critical role to play in developing and delivering a full-fibre vision for Hertfordshire.

3. Digital Landscape

The following two tables provide a countywide overview and regional insight into the availability and presence of full-fibre and gigabit capable networks as of 22nd February 2021 (data based on Think Broadband database).

Table 1

Current coverage overview at county, borough and district level.

Council District	Superfast 30Mb+ %	FTTP %	Gigabit Capable %	Virgin Media Coverage %
Hertfordshire	98.06	7.99	8.04	79.44
Broxbourne	99.31	2.98	2.98	87.59
Dacorum	98.08	4.90	4.90	78.31
East Herts	96.11	10.80	10.80	63.87
Hertsmere	98.48	7.01	7.01	82.20
North Herts	97.07	3.89	3.89	75.06
St Albans	98.28	24.33	24.33	85.04
Stevenage	99.61	1.57	1.57	91.09
Three Rivers	98.15	7.06	7.06	77.18
Watford	99.98	2.38	2.38	93.46
Welwyn Hatfield	97.26	7.76	7.76	71.38

To note:

- Openreach is already progressing and/or has announced full fibre investments based on the following telephone exchanges in Hemel Hempstead, Watford, Harpenden, St Albans, Codicote and Rickmansworth;
- Virgin Media has a penetration of 79% across Hertfordshire which will follow the proposed upgrade of its existing network by the end of 2021;



this means that this network will be deemed gigabit capable;

- Other than St Albans, every other district within Hertfordshire is below the national average;
- Some rural parts of Hertfordshire will benefit from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) 'Outside In' Fund which is focused on addressing those areas which have not been identified by the private sector as areas of potential investment;

Table 2

Comparison of current coverage in neighbouring county/unitary authorities in Southern England.

Council/Area	FFTP %	Gigabit Capable %	Virgin Media Coverage %
Hertfordshire	7.99	8.04	79.44
Berkshire	12.18	63.03	63.43
Bucks	10.26	17.96	33.72
Essex	16.16	21.50	36.82
Kent	18.54	22.43	38.55
Surrey	15.40	17.17	66.15
Slough	19.93	19.93	83.92

To note:

- CityFibre is currently investing in a full fibre deployment in Slough, Reading, Maidenhead and Milton Keynes;
- Openreach is currently investing in a full fibre deployment in Slough;
- Virgin Media has already completed its Gigabit upgrade in Berkshire;
- Hertfordshire is significantly behind other counties within the Home Counties in having access to FTTP (Full Fibre to the Premise) and Gigabit capable networks.

4. Market Engagement

As part of this strategic exercise and to aid greater understanding of the current and future fibre landscape within the county, an engagement of the fibre carrier market was carried out.

A series of individual virtual sessions were hosted by Regional Network Solutions (RNS) in collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire LEP during January and February 2021.

The purpose of these sessions was to listen to the market and understand in more detail:

- the current levels of full fibre coverage in Hertfordshire;
- their current and future plans for full fibre investment;
- what would encourage companies to invest in further full fibre deployment?
- how such fibre connectivity could be an enabler for future public sector reform;
- what barriers are there to future investment?

The companies taking part were:

Fibre Carriers:

- Openreach
- Virgin Media
- CityFibre
- Swish Fibre
- Zayo
- Zzoomm
- Hyperoptic
- Gigaclear
- SSE Telecom

Mobile Operators:

- Vodafone
- 3
- EE

(02 Telefonica were invited but hadn't responded at the time of writing this report.)

Whilst mapping of current and future coverage was requested as part of this engagement it



should be noted that such market information was not forthcoming on grounds of commercial confidentiality.

In terms of current fibre and gigabit coverage, please refer to the Think Broadband: <https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/index.php?tab=2&election=1#13/51.8509/0.0152/gigaclear/fullfibre/virgin/>

5. Key market engagement findings

A summary of these sessions is listed here:

- There is real market desire interest to invest, albeit much of this interest remains commercially confidential.
- There is clear evidence that Hertfordshire would benefit from further investment and would see a significant rise in the level of Gigabit capable networks which is currently below the national average of 34.6%.
- There were no clear signs that Hertfordshire would attract immediate further investment in full fibre, in sharp contrast to other neighbouring authorities. This was reflected in CityFibre's latest roll-out announcement in March, when Berkshire and Essex were included but not Hertfordshire.
- We welcome Virgin Media's planned upgrade of their Data Over Cable Service Interface Specifications (DOCSIS) network which will result in over 79% of residences and business having access to a gigabit capable network by the end of 2021. However, while this will mean that Hertfordshire will move above the national headline average for access to gigabit capable connectivity, it is very apparent that this may have an impact on actual FTTP investment which potentially will reduce competition and limit opportunity. This could place Hertfordshire at a disadvantage.
- A number of Alnets (Alternative Network Providers) remain keen to invest in Hertfordshire however the investment will be influenced by the presence of Virgin Media. However, it should be noted that the presence of Virgin Media has not deterred full fibre investment in Berkshire where the Virgin Media upgrade of its network has already been completed (CityFibre is already delivering in Reading, Slough and Maidenhead).
- There is interest in developing a public sector anchor tenancy model based on public sector connectivity requirements which could accelerate full fibre investment in Hertfordshire across individual councils as well as collectively across the county. This model is based on the principle that a local authority's future connectivity requirements become an anchor on a fibre network delivered through private sector investment (guaranteed rental revenue over a 10 to 15-year period but at a substantially reduced cost to councils). Councils which have adopted such a strategy, such as Southend, have benefited from a subsequent investment which will result in every residential and business address having access to full fibre. Although CityFibre is keen to promote this model, other carriers such as Openreach (Leeds), Zayo and SSE Telecom (Aberdeenshire) are also actively promoting such a model across the UK.
- There was general support for a market information day to be potentially hosted by Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire County Council. This would give the market insight into development opportunities and understand how further market engagement and fibre investment could be promoted.
- It is evident that proactive marketing of Hertfordshire's opportunities will generate further interest and investment.
- Hertfordshire appears to have only recently started to benefit from increased investment in 5G and this investment is primarily focused on 3 and, to a lesser extent, EE. Regrettably, o2 Telefonica and Vodafone do not appear to view Hertfordshire as a priority area for 5G.
- This engagement exercise was welcomed by the market and was viewed as a platform which should encourage further and more extensive future dialogue.



- The work of Connected Counties was recognised and should be seen as a key channel for future engagement in respect to both fibre and mobile coverage.

6. Workstreams and immediate recommendations

Based on the findings above, this reports sets out a series of workstreams which should be aligned to the wider digital aspirations for Hertfordshire. By securing the support of Growth Board members, this will significantly contribute to elevating the importance of digital, attracting investment and enabling opportunities for all communities and businesses across Hertfordshire.

Immediate recommendations

1. Local Plans & Planning

All local authorities within Hertfordshire need to ensure that a full fibre aspiration is incorporated within their draft Local Plans (such inclusion provides a clear statement to developers and the market in respect to the recognised importance of connectivity).

Progress should also be made in supporting the development of respective Local Plans to develop local Telecommunications Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), incorporating fibre and mobile deployment. This could be based on the draft SPD for Ashford Borough Council.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council with the support of Hertfordshire Growth Board member (Hertfordshire LEP)

2. Market Information Day

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire LEP to host a Market Information Day this summer with a view to inviting carriers and other key telecom infrastructure companies to hear about Hertfordshire's full fibre vision and the planned opportunities which could be of interest to the market, attracting and acting as a catalyst for further private sector investment.

A similar approach was adopted by Fastershire, a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council to bring faster broadband to the two counties, which was well

supported by the market and generated a number of opportunities and further investment.

Key Actions

- Prepare an information pack detailing new developments, regeneration projects and problem areas (coverage) which can be presented to the market.
- Host a Market Information Day and invite representatives of carriers, mobile operators and telecom infrastructure companies to hear about Hertfordshire's fibre and wider digital vision in order to view the county as an opportunity for investment.

Key Objectives

- Raise the profile of Hertfordshire.
- Provide a platform for local authorities to proactively engage with the market and deliver a clear message that Hertfordshire is a county of opportunity for digital investment.

Key Outcome

- To accelerate full-fibre investment into the county benefiting businesses and residents.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP with the support of Hertfordshire Growth Board member Hertfordshire County Council

3. Mapping

Immediate consideration should be afforded to exploring with all Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members to utilize the Geographic Information System (GIS) to map all the points of presence, infrastructure, assets and connectivity across the county with all new developments, planned regeneration schemes, social housing, private residential care homes, business parks, hubs and sector clusters.

The purpose and outcome of this mapping would be fivefold:

- provide additionality to existing mapping developed by the Connected Counties team;



- give an overview of all public sector assets which could be an enabler for full fibre and/or mobile deployment;
- give an overview of business related sites and understand how public sector fibre requirements could be a catalyst for further private sector investment;
- give an overview of socio-economic data and how this could help local authorities to focus on specific connectivity interventions;
- contribute to future funding bids. Having supported two successful Wave 3 LFF Bids and two full-fibre public sector procurements, such mapping has proven to be crucial to securing funding.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council working in partnership with Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members

Workstreams

1. Future Market Engagement

This would explore in more detail the options available to maintain and develop market engagement. Based on insight from other LEP and local authority areas, there is value in formalising this process by adopting the following approach:

- Market Engagement – Fibre Carriers: to instigate on a quarterly basis further engagement with a view to seeking an update on current and future plans across Hertfordshire.

Key Objectives

- Regular dialogue with the market.
- Share opportunities regarding major developments/regeneration schemes such as Hemel Garden Communities and Harlow Gilston Garden Town.

Key Deliverables

- Raise the profile of Hertfordshire with the market and ensure that

the current level of FTTP coverage in Hertfordshire which is currently below the national average is increased through private sector investment.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP & Hertfordshire County Council (Potential Role for proposed Digital Board)

- Market Engagement – Mobile Operators: to instigate on a quarterly basis further engagement with the mobile operators with a view to seeking an update on current and future plans across Hertfordshire.

Key Actions

- Arrange quarterly meetings.
- Focus engagement on understanding current and future coverage plans for each of the mobile operators.
- Understand current barriers and obstacles to improving coverage.
- Develop in dialogue with the Mobile Network Operator's (MNO) standard lease templates (based on the West Midlands and Norfolk County Council's model) which could be used by all local authorities.
- Co-ordinate a planning workshop for all including all local authorities to discuss the MNO's planning policy and processes relating to mobile phone installations.

Key Objectives

- Regular dialogue with the market.
- Raise the profile of Hertfordshire, ensuring that Hertfordshire benefits from increased investment (5G Investment).
- Improve mobile coverage – address 'not spots'.



- Identify ways in which Hertfordshire can benefit from the Shared Rural Network Initiative.

Key Outcome

- Improve mobile coverage and ensure that Hertfordshire benefits from future 5G investment.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP & Hertfordshire County Council (Potential Role for proposed Digital Board)

2. Barrier Busting

A workstream should be developed to explore how local authorities could collectively adopt a proactive approach to wayleaves to secure:

- A consistent and transparent policy toward permit and wayleave fees;
- A practical approach to providing a bulk wayleave process for telecom providers with a view to accelerating deployment;
- Understand what resources each council will require to support a major fibre deployment and how it could leverage a Clerk of Works funded by the private sector.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council working in partnership with Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members

3. Public sector assets and infrastructure

Explore a workstream which considers how public sector bodies could compile, through an exercise of due diligence, a schedule of sites (greenfield, rooftop and building) which could be offered to the mobile operators as a means of addressing current coverage issues and accelerating future 5G deployment. Such a strategic approach would be based on a number of core principles as detailed below and would seek to replicate similar initiatives already being delivered in West Midlands, Norfolk and the Sheffield City Region.

- A recognition that as a county council the asset base may be limited, but via the Hertfordshire Growth Board and its co-opted members, it could bring together the public sector. This would create an opportunity to develop a significant and diverse portfolio of assets and infrastructure which could make a significant contribution to accelerating investment and addressing areas of poor mobile coverage. These assets could potentially include fire towers, NHS sites, radio towers etc.

- The focus would be on partnership with mobile operators to attract further investment and improve coverage as opposed to generating revenue from site rental or additional access charges. This strategic decision would require clear sponsorship from Hertfordshire's public sector leaders.

- Hertfordshire Growth Board members and other public sector partners would play a facilitating role in working with the mobile operators to address potential barriers and accelerate deployment.

- Interactions between Hertfordshire Growth Board members and mobile operators should be manageable and should not place unnecessary burdens or barriers on either party.

- Any template lease agreement concluded between Hertfordshire County Council and the mobile operators (to be shared with other Hertfordshire Growth Board members and public sector partners) would need to recognise that work undertaken by mobile operators should not create additional costs for Hertfordshire County Council and should ensure that any partnership remained cost neutral and would not be a vehicle for generating additional revenue.

- In the spirit of partnership all relevant information would be shared freely and openly with all parties.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council with Hertfordshire Growth Board members and public sector partners



4. Future Public Sector Connectivity Requirements

By exploring future connectivity requirements and accompanying contracts, an opportunity exists for Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members to work with other public sector organisations, including schools, to undertake a comprehensive review of all their connectivity and associated service layer costs (social care, CCTV, traffic management etc.). This audit would involve each local authority and be wide-reaching to ensure that it goes beyond the responsibility of respective ICT departments.

This will help to ensure that each local authority area has a clear strategic overview of all current connectivity provision and costs (fixed and mobile) as well as associated service delivery costs. This, in turn, would enable each local authority to understand how connectivity contracts and requirements could form the basis of future procurement where a fibre requirement is specified for each public sector site or service. Such a strategy, if adopted, would not only realise potential savings and improvement in service delivery but also ensure that with fibre being taken out to public sector sites, this would extend the reach of fibre into communities which, in turn, would generate greater investment from the market, such as school connectivity requirements.

Such an approach is radically changing how the market views the future delivery of public sector connectivity with various models now emerging in Leeds, Suffolk, Aberdeenshire and Southend.

Before embarking on a collective audit, the Growth Board may wish to consider exploring this option in further detail by engaging with local authorities who have successfully implemented such a strategy as well instigating some further market engagement.

This report believes this approach is worth exploring and could realise very significant long term internal benefits by accelerating the level of FFTP investment that currently does not exist across the county.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council with other Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members

5. Digital Inclusion

The impact of COVID-19 and the increasing reliance of access to the internet for work, business growth, education and public information has escalated the importance of digital access, affordability and inclusion. Therefore, in developing and, most importantly, delivering a digital strategy for Hertfordshire it is important that all stakeholders address this issue.

Inclusion can take many forms from reducing isolation in our elderly population to supporting a child studying at home and therefore it is recommended that inclusion is regarded as a separate workstream and should be developed through close collaboration across various public sector bodies and agencies.

As a first phase this workstream would focus on addressing digital inclusion within social housing in which private sector investment is encouraged to deploy a FFTP solution to social housing at no cost to local authorities or housing associations.

Such initiatives have already been successfully delivered in Wandsworth, Thurrock, Newcastle, Salford and Southwark. The aspiration has been to deliver a FFTP service to residents in social housing. This recognises the need to deliver a service which is accessible and affordable to residents (based on flexible contracts and no credit checks) and contributes to addressing social and digital inclusion within our communities.

Other similar projects have demonstrated a considerable benefit (evidenced by estimated take up of between 30-40%) in both aligning itself to a wider full fibre aspiration and enabling residents to be part of digital transformation.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire County Council (potential role for proposed Digital Board)

6. Digital Skills

Promoting digital skills is regarded as a key component in supporting our recovery from COVID-19. Digital skills are multi-faceted, embracing basic skills required to 'get on line', which will help young people to prepare for employment; new skills in an ever changing



workplace and skills supporting more elderly and infirm residents who will benefit from digital based services.

Through Hertfordshire Growth Board and working across the public and private sectors, there is an opportunity to exploit how improvements in and access to connectivity can be a catalyst to support the development of digital skills.

As part of this exploratory workstream, there will be merit in exploring:

- how through public sector procurement social value can be generated with a focus on advancing digital skills funded and promoted by the private sector;
- how improving connectivity into schools could support improvement in digital skills (coding) as well as promoting digital skills within the local community, with schools potentially performing the role of a local digital skills hub;
- how working with commercial operators to leverage access to data could, for example, support coding initiatives in schools.
- the creation of a countywide digital skills initiative which shares insights, collaborates on opportunities and becomes the point of reference for promoting private sector initiatives;
- how working with public and private sector partners, Hertfordshire Growth Board can engage with and encourage those in our communities who are anxious about using digital technology to 'get online'.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP (potential role for proposed Digital Board)

7. Business Connectivity

Access to improved connectivity (greater capacity and faster speeds) is, and increasingly will be, an integral consideration for many businesses.

While many larger companies already rely upon such connectivity, many medium and smaller sized enterprises still operate on old legacy networks. Although, in some cases, this may be because improved connectivity is perceived as not necessary, in most cases it is more the result of cost or lack of access to fibre connectivity.

To address this apparent imbalance this report is proposing a workstream which explores in further detail connectivity for business and in particular considers the following:

- how to raise awareness about the business benefit of fibre?
- a county based business gigabit voucher scheme potentially sponsored by the LEP.

Building upon the success of the current DCMS sponsored Rural Gigabit Voucher, explore the opportunity of introducing a top up fund to the existing voucher scheme increasing the voucher value from £3,000 to £5,000 until March 2022. Such an approach has already been adopted in West Sussex and West Yorkshire.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire LEP

8. Town Centre Regeneration

Recognising the impact that COVID-19 is and will have upon the future role and scope of town centres across Hertfordshire and to support some of the initiatives already being considered to support town centre renewal and regeneration, this report proposes that a workstream should be progressed which seeks to align the role of digital connectivity with town centre regeneration schemes.

This should cover fixed, mobile, wireless and IOT connectivity and services and how such connectivity can drive and enable identified outcomes and innovation.

A lighthouse project could focus on one town centre which could potentially become a beacon for future investment and private sector collaboration.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP working with Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members



9. Government Funding

Although a number of significant Government funding schemes are still ongoing and others are being launched as part of the Government's Project Gigabit Strategy, this workstream would explore the option of developing a sustainable business case to justify the funding of a full-fibre solution to rural public sector buildings, including schools within Hertfordshire. By developing such a proposition this would present Hertfordshire with the opportunity to engage with DCMS and seek to secure funding for a potential pilot for the Public Sector Hub Site workstream which forms part of the Government's project to deliver fast and reliable broadband.

This would enable Hertfordshire to be prepared to bid for any future infrastructure funding where the delivery of digital infrastructure could be considered, such as, for example, the East Herts and West Essex GP Surgeries Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) Project. This £1.7m investment enabled GP services to potentially deliver more health care remotely, online and through digital applications.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire LEP (potential role for proposed Digital Board)

10. IOT Networks

While the market engagement focused on fixed and mobile connectivity, this report notes the increasing impact of the 'Internet of Things' and how this contributes to service delivery, innovation and strategic thinking based on data analysis.

While Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council have already invested in and deployed LoRaWAN networks which can support a wider IOT aspiration, the Growth Board could explore looking at an IOT LoRaWAN countywide investment case delivering benefits for the public (service delivery, highway management), private (innovation and new business) and third sectors.

This would entail exploring the merits of investing in the deployment of a public sector owned and managed LoRaWAN network, a strategy already successfully adopted in Norfolk and Suffolk with the support of New Anglia LEP. This model is now realising a number of significant outcomes in respect to supporting the development of local digital skills, creating a platform for local

enterprise and innovation and contributing to how the public sector delivers services and supports communities and businesses.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council with support from Hertfordshire LEP (potential role for proposed Digital Board)

Strategic Workstreams

Workstreams deemed a priority to create the right level of governance and direction to deliver a digital strategy for Hertfordshire.

1. Sponsorship

In order for a full fibre vision to be realised, there needs to be a clear mandate from senior officers and elected representatives from across the Hertfordshire Growth Board membership. Without this, this vision will remain an aspiration in reports rather than delivering real and tangible outcomes.

Key Actions

- To develop this level of sponsorship via the Growth Board by co-ordinating presentations and/or a workshop to review a digital strategy in a post COVID-19 world and identify both the challenges and opportunities that have emerged and understand how connectivity will be a key enabler to respond to these changes.

Key Deliverables

- To secure sponsorship across the Hertfordshire Growth Board membership which will ensure that digital is at the heart of public sector decision making going forward.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP working in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council (Growth Board Sponsorship)

2. Creation of a County Digital Governance Board

This report would propose exploring the option of creating a Hertfordshire Digital Board, the role that this could play, its composition and its remit.



Based on insights and experience elsewhere within the public sector where such an approach has been adopted namely Leeds City Council and Norfolk County Council it can realise considerable benefits and will ensure that a clear and focused message is conveyed to the market which would mean increased investment.

As part of this process, it is recommended that serious consideration is afforded to creating a countywide group which explores:

- public sector connectivity (not exclusively local authorities);
- IOT Strategy – opportunities for sharing and developing a countywide IOT network;
- development of countywide planning policies re. full fibre and mobile deployment;
- sharing digital initiatives – public and private sectors;
- co-ordinate responses to national funding bids.

The purpose of this review and potential outcome would be to create a vehicle which could:

- co-ordinate Hertfordshire's collective approach to digital investment
- become the conduit for sharing initiatives and opportunities, ensuring a more holistic and integrated approach towards digital connectivity;
- become the strategic influencer and enabler of IOT and digital projects.
- become the formal channel of digital advocacy into Government.

Lead

Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire County Council

3. Enhanced role of Connected Counties team

The purpose of the Superfast Hertfordshire Connected Counties Team needs to be reviewed with a view to enhancing and strengthening its collective role and responsibility across

Hertfordshire, reflecting the increasing importance of digital infrastructure on the local economy.

Lead

Hertfordshire County Council with Hertfordshire Growth Board partners including the LEP

Conclusion

Hertfordshire Growth Board has an exceptional opportunity thanks to the major development and regeneration schemes; the future requirements of local authority connectivity; the proactive approach adopted by Connected Counties and a genuine interest from the telecom market to invest in fibre infrastructure, to deliver a gigabit capable fibre network across the whole county.

The realisation of a full fibre infrastructure delivered through partnership between the private and public sector and a proactive enabling role being adopted by Hertfordshire Growth Board local authority members would provide:

- a vehicle to give real momentum to digital transformation;
- a strategy which is not just dependent upon council funding or public sector intervention;
- a fibre platform which could deliver long term savings for the public sector; attract long term investment from business and put Hertfordshire at the forefront of digital transformation within the UK; and
- positively contribute to Hertfordshire emerging from the challenges and impacts of COVID-19.



