
**Decision Session – Executive Leader
(incorporating Finance and Performance)**

14 January 2019

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director of Customer & Corporate Services

**Digital City Programme update and expanding access to York’s
Wi-Fi connectivity platform**

Summary

1. This report provides an update on some of the progress made within City of York Council’s Digital City Programme with a focus on the city’s free Wi-Fi and an expansion proposal including Clifford’s Tower, Coppergate and the new Community Stadium complex as part of future proofing the stadiums digital connectivity links as we have done with many buildings and areas of the city.
2. It is noted that as this is part of our wider and continual evolving Digital City Programme, there will be potential other future requirements, and these will need to be considered as part of the capital programme.

Recommendations

3. The Executive Leader is asked to:
 - 1) Note the progress being made within the Digital City Programme.

Reason: To provide an update on the key and enabling Digital City Programme with an emphasis on the cities digital connectivity landscape.
 - 2) Approve the proposal to extend access to the cities free Wi-Fi into Clifford’s Tower & Coppergate.

Reason: To be a part of the evolving Digital City Programme.

- 3) To provide the digital connectivity links into the new Community Stadium complex and expand its Wi-Fi coverage.

Reason: To be a part of the evolving Digital City Programme and future proof the Stadiums complex digital links.

- 4) Approve total funding of £308,000 from the existing ICT Capital budget.

Reason: To fund the recommendations contained within this report.

- 5) Note the current mixed position with schools, endorse further discussions with schools regarding Wi-Fi provision, and to receive a further report on this including funding options in coming months.

Reason: To approve the work to explore and undertake further discussions that are required to take this recommendation forwards.

Background

4. Access to free external and internal Wi-Fi services was identified as one of the key themes within our initial and evolving work programme as part of our aspiration and desire to become a well-connected digital city through a blend of significant private and public sector funding streams.
5. This included our successful bids to secure funding from Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) and their super connected city programme, where we secured £2.16m to deliver a number of key projects with the majority of them being focused on establishing and also expanded the Wi-Fi connectivity landscape within our communities and city centre by building upon and utilising the fibre network within the City.
6. City of York Council's internal and external Wi-Fi services has become a very prominent feature of the City's digital connectivity landscape, with external coverage across most of the city centre, within its key open spaces and some of its urban shopping areas, and also on its park and ride and regional bus services that was then extended by First across its York fleet.
7. And with internal access being available from most of the Councils buildings including but not restricted to; our Community Hubs,

Children Centres, Explore Centres and Libraries, Residential Care homes, Mansion House, Park and Ride Terminuses, West offices, Hazel Court, Registry Office and Crematorium.

8. As there is within other cities and towns, there is also access to range of none City of York Council external and internal Wi-Fi services across the city including within some of our schools.
9. The council provides a filtered broadband/internet access to all its schools and telephony services to around 50 schools that also makes use of the schools broadband link back to West Offices.
10. The other elements of ICT services within schools are provided by from within the school and or through other service providers and this includes Wi-Fi for some of the schools who looked to have this service.
11. We will explore the possibilities, options and implications as this could require investment in the local network infrastructure within the schools as part of being able to offer Wi-Fi services within those schools that don't currently have it as part of our going work with them.
12. Access to free Wi-Fi is now part of our everyday lives as we have seen digital connectivity become referred to and known as the 4th utility, and having access to the many different network layers that are required to manage the existing and future demands is a vital ingredient for any city, town or place.
13. City of York Council has a proven and successful profile within and beyond the UK in terms of its ability to secure continuing levels of interest and private and public sector investment that have combined to significantly change York's digital connectivity landscape, and provide a key enabling platform for the city.
14. The council's ICT Digital Team continues to engage with both residents and businesses to promote the multiple regional and national voucher schemes that City of York Council are part of and which provides access to external funding.
15. This is enabling us to secure a range of digital services and packages for York's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

and residents including improving broadband speeds, and we have secured in excess of £300K to date through these schemes.

16. In terms of supporting our rural communities, progress has been made through the Superfast West Yorkshire and York programme and its deployment of superfast broadband to some of our rural villages.
17. Since last August, a further 5x Openreach cabinets have been upgraded resulting in another 200 further premises being able to benefit from having access to superfast broadband, and there are further upgrades planned for 2019/20.
18. York is leading the way in terms of its current high levels of premises that have access to ultrafast broadband that continues to be expanded and is funded by significant private sector investment into the city, and that coupled with its coverage of access to free Wi-Fi, contributed to York being named the “Best connected City within the UK” earlier this year.
19. However, City of York Council needs to continue to build on this, and ensure that we provide digital services in all key areas of the city, and areas where there is significant footfall, dwell time and where educational benefits may be obtained.
20. York’s Wi-Fi service is already being used to provide a number of other services including supporting York’s traffic management team, providing safe and secure direct access into higher education and other public sector organisations in addition to providing general access to the internet, and we will continue to explore other opportunities that it can and will be used for including within some of our schools.
21. It is therefore, and as part of Digital City Programme, important that that we consider extending our free Wi-Fi service as we look to further future proof York’s digital connectivity landscape.
22. Its important to note and as mentioned earlier every city, town or place requires a number of different network layers, and York is no different, and we have recently added to the cities digital connectivity layers through the Department for Transport (DfT) funded transport programme by establishing a new wireless layer

that will support some of our Digital Services programme, that is complimentary to the fibre and Wi-Fi networks.

23. We are also exploring the opportunities of bringing 5G and Small cell services to York given the blend of our compact size and density, the current and expanding fibre & Wi-Fi networks and our open for business approach in terms of facilitating further investment into the city that may require the use of or managed access to our city and or our street & building assets.
24. We have already seen the benefit of our layered approach, as we have moved services from one layer to another or add additional services to a layer as this allows the evolving and growing demand to be managed effectively.
25. It is essential that York retains and adds to these layers as our changing needs and emerging opportunities will rely on them being in place as we look to harness the potential of being a well connected city.

Community Stadium Complex & costs for wider Wi-Fi expansion

26. The Stadium complex is currently under construction and is scheduled to be open summer 2019 and there is an existing requirement on the GLL consortium to deliver public Wi-Fi but only within limited areas of the complex as part of the contracted works schedule.
27. There is the opportunity to make sure that we future proof the new Community Stadium complex by extending the fibre network that will used to provide access to free Wi-Fi and others services as part of our wider and continual evolving Digital City Programme.
28. The costs for City of York Council to create the network and extend its free Wi-Fi coverage across the new Community Stadium complex would be £250,000.
29. In respect of Coppergate and Cliffords Tower both these areas receive very high levels of footfall each year, which has increased since the reopening of the Viking Centre attraction and the substantial growth in its visitor numbers.
30. The costs to extend access to the existing city centre and open space free Wi-Fi it into Coppergate and Cliffords Tower would be

£58,000, and this would provide a platform for other services to be enhanced or extended into these areas.

31. The existing ICT Capital programme makes provision for significant investment in the Council's Digital Services Programme and due to some delays/deferrals in respect of other schemes, existing capital funding for this proposal is available.

Options

32. The principal options relate to simply either making the investment as set out, or not making the investment. If the investment is not made for the Community Stadium now, whilst it could be considered at a future date, as set out in the risks section the costs are likely to be significantly higher.
33. Not investing in both schemes will provide a poorer visitor experience and it would not be reflective or in line with the ambition within our Digital City Services Programme.

Implications:

Financial – Covered within the report.

Human Resources (HR) – None.

Equalities, Crime and Disorder and ICT – Covered within the report.

Legal – None.

Property – None.

Other – None.

Risk Management – Stadium costs

34. The available window to instruct any additional ducting and containment works with the main building contractor is very tight in terms of the council raising a formal contract change ahead of the wiring work starting within the main East Stand of the stadium.

35. This does not prevent the enhanced works happening at a later date and alongside the final construction phases, however and as previously identified, it is highly likely the containment costs will increase due to the additional costs for having to go back and re-wire areas they have already completed.
36. These works could be undertaken at any point in the future, once the stadium is complete, but it is important to note though, that in this scenario, there would be very significant costs to re-open closed works and repair any damage and disruption caused. There would also be greater cost in contracting a party to just deliver this work, without the cost savings of including the work in the current construction package with our main building contractors.

Contact Details

Author:

Roy Grant
Shared Head of ICT Services
for York and Harrogate
01904 551966

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Ian Floyd
Deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director
of Customer & Corporate Services

Report **Date** 03.01.19
Approved

Wards Affected: All

For further information please contact the author of the report