

**Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee**

**3 October 2022**

Report of the Director of Customer & Community Services

**Digital Inclusion Update**

**Summary**

1. This report provides an update for committee members covering the following areas:
  - The digital inclusion partnership led by Explore York and the council;
  - The digital connectivity landscape in York for both residents and businesses.

**Background**

**100% Digital York Partnership update from Explore York**

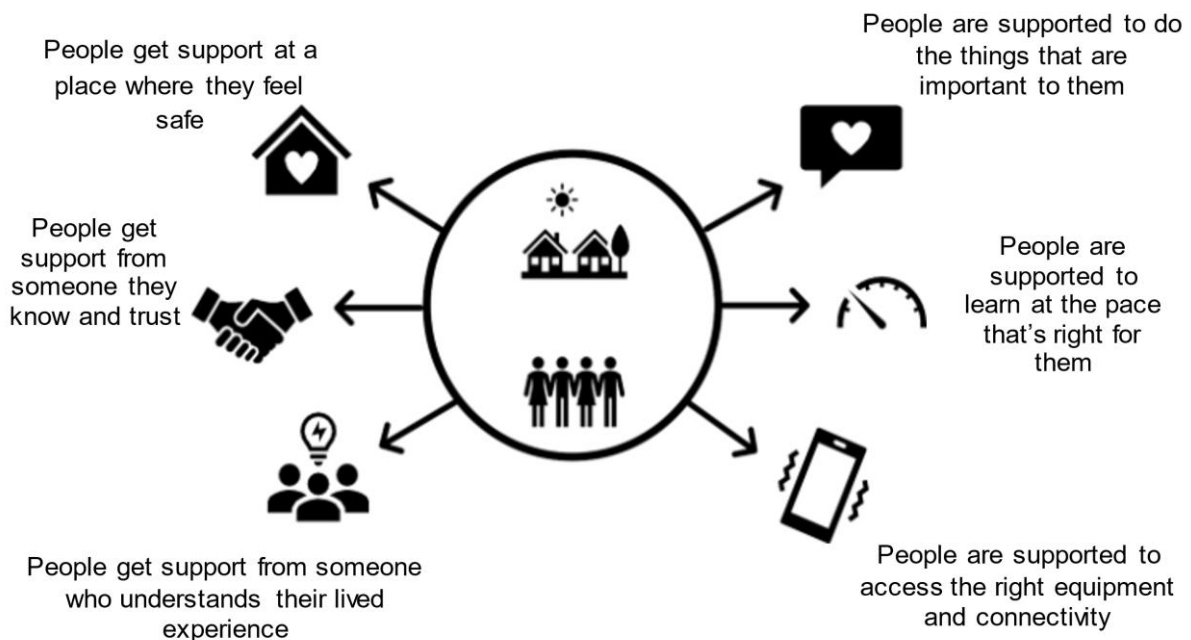
2. Workstreams have been identified from the priorities agreed by over 80 people representing communities and organisation across the city.
3. Of these priorities the IT Re-use scheme was already in development through the work of some of the partners so is the most developed and a great success story.
4. With CYC funding to create a part time Digital York Partnership Network Co-ordinator we are now able to ensure all the work that is happening across the York to support digital inclusion is captured and gaps identified, ensuring a cohesive, person-centred approach.
5. Our co-ordinator was introduced to the partnership at a meeting in early August where we discussed and agreed to re-focus our approach. This was also an opportunity to invite 100% Digital Leeds to share their success and this really re-energised our enthusiasm for what could be achieved.

6. As agreed, our key priorities for the next 6 months are:

## Digital Champions Network

This will focus on both individual volunteers and community organisations:

- **Volunteers**  
Recruited by Keeping Digital (a digital inclusiveness charity) and the Co-ordinator in partnership with York CVS. Volunteers will deliver Digital Café drop-in sessions across the city in community venues, launching this month (September). Volunteers will be matched with need and follow-on support will be provided by York Learning and Explore.
- **Community organisations**  
We will adopt a community-based approach with the person at the centre, strengthening the place to empower the person. We will work with community groups and organisations, understand the impact and outcomes they are seeking to achieve and use digital inclusion as a tool to support those aims. We are intending to take a pilot approach in Acomb and this is what it could look like:



In Acomb we have started to map community organisations, supported by the Local Area Co-ordinator. The learning from this pilot will inform next steps,

will provide impact stories to support advocacy and we hope will generate peer to peer advocacy across the city.

## **Marketing and Communications**

- All digital support has been brought together on one page on Live Well York website, linked from the home page for greater prominence.
- Social media feed will be linked to Live Well Website for latest news and updates.
- Printed and digital newsletter to send to organisations within the pilot area and beyond.
- Key promotional event: Get On-line Week 17 – 23 October, this will provide profile raising opportunity for partnership and with a specific campaign for the IT Re-use Scheme.
- Presentation to all Local Area Co-ordinators for awareness raising late August.

## **Accessibility and Inclusivity - This is an overarching priority that needs to be considered in all we do**

- Develop a venue accessibility checklist.
- Key promotional opportunities for focused activity such as International Disability Week including partners such AbilityNet.

## **Evaluation - For advocacy/Future funding & Sponsorship/Volunteer support and buy-in**

- Focus on People: Make a difference Stories. Volunteer and community organisation outcomes and impact.
- Provide longitudinal tracking opportunities with specific groups / individuals.
- Identify key metrics: numbers.

## **Funding for sustainability**

- Produce a wish list for funding for specific projects eg IT Re-use Scheme and for 100% Digital Inclusion partnership.
  - Focus on funding opportunities for outcomes that digital inclusion can support such as reducing social isolation, improving health and wellbeing, reducing re-offending etc.
7. To provide additional support and expertise for the partnership we have developed a strategic steering group this will help to keep momentum.

Representatives from organisations, including CYC are supporting the steering group.

### **Digital Connectivity Update.**

8. Please see below for an update on the current and planned programme of work around York's fixed Digital Connectivity Landscape that CYC are involved in:

### **Superfast West Yorkshire & York (SFWY&Y) Programme**

9. York is part of phase 3 of the SFWY&Y programme that is targeting rural intervention areas within this combined region to help enable access to improved levels of broadband.
10. Following some recent work by Quickline Communications who are the delivery partner for phase 3, approximately 130 properties within Skelton can now access much improved broadband services which helps to address the previous imbalance within Skelton. We are now working with Quickline to help raise the awareness of this recent network expansion with residents and businesses.
11. The villages of Naburn and Deighton are next in line to benefit from the SFWY&Y programme. The current delivery plan is indicating late Autumn and should provide access to improved levels of broadband services for approximately 300 properties. A marketing and community engagement plan will take place nearer the time of the network going live.

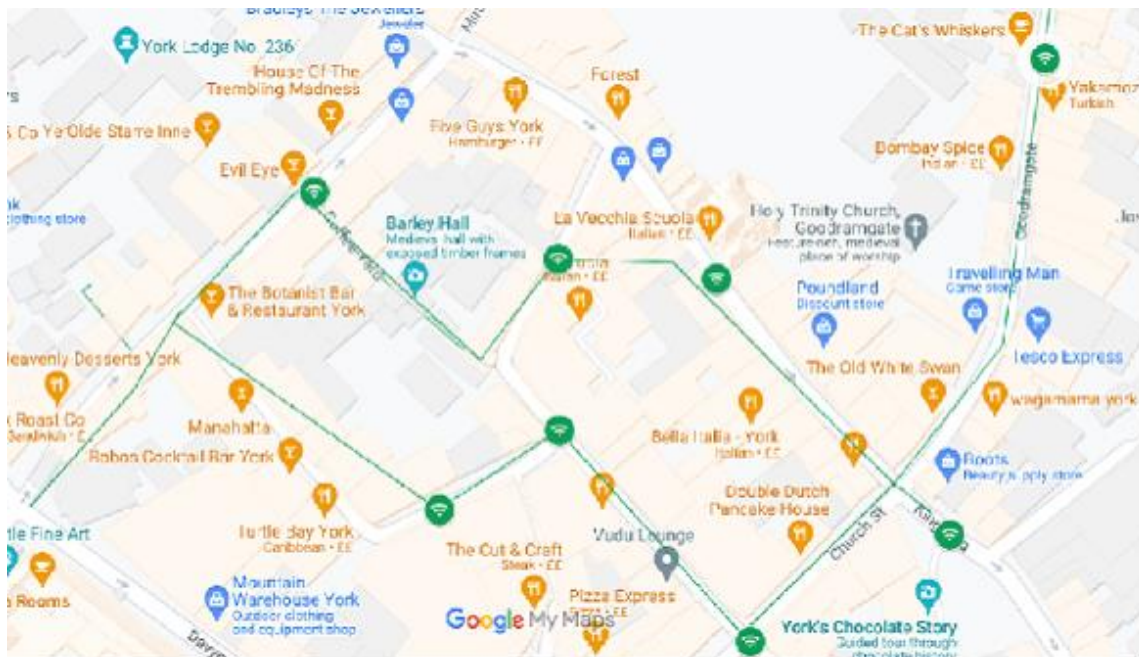
### **Elvington Full Fibre Broadband rollout**

12. Continuing with an update on our more rural parts of the city, we are able to confirm that the new fibre based network, funded through the Building Digital (BDUK) rural gigabit voucher scheme, is now live and taking orders from residents and businesses in the village.
13. The first customers are now using the full fibre network, with installation slots filling up fast. In addition to this, Elvington Village Hall now have full access to the fibre broadband at no cost, as a gesture from FACTCo (the ISP or Internet Service Provider) that has already made a huge difference.
14. The current village hall chairman is quoted as saying 'The huge increase in broadband speeds, both download and upload, has been immediately

apparent, and with an increase in bandwidth, will enable us to offer a greater variety of services to our users’.

## City Centre

15. Our City and town centres are traditionally seen as hard to reach places in terms of private sector investment initiatives due to the higher build costs and lower take up opportunities.
16. With the help of funding however through the Digital Enterprise programme, which offers eligible businesses up to £3k towards improved digital connectivity, UK Fibre Networks are looking to build upon their existing network (please see the map below) and expand their city centre fibre network, subject to street works permit approval process.



17. We are also working another telecommunication provider FactCo, who we previously worked with to provide access to fibre based ultra-fast broadband down The Shambles, as they are also looking to expand their fibre network in the city centre alongside their rural programme as mentioned above.
18. The current areas for this expansion include both Gillygate and Hungate, both of which are still in planning stage and subject to street works

permit approvals with a view to start the work as soon as possible to meet the registered high demand.

19. A recent good example of the difference access to improved broadband services can make is Buckingham Court in Skeldergate, that has approximately 30 apartments that now have access to ultrafast broadband. One of the residents quoted “This is absolutely amazing – we have both struggled for a long time now trying to work from home. We used to have to constantly close down apps and leave just one running. This caused us both a great deal of frustration whilst talking on video calls to work colleagues. Thankfully, this is now a thing of the past and we can even watch Netflix in the comfort of our own home – thank you FactCo!!”

### **CityFibre update**

20. Digital York/ICT and Streetworks are proactively engaging with CityFibre to ensure we are all working together efficiently as they are due to restart their main construction work to connect a further 14,000 homes in the Autumn alongside further infill work.
21. CityFibre are committed to ensuring communication maintains at the forefront of their work from letter drops and social media posts to ward Councillor updates.
22. In addition to this, CityFibre have recently announced the new ISPs that have joined providing a choice of Service Providers to our residents and businesses.

### **Openreach 2-5 year plan**

23. Openreach plan to expand its fibre presence within the city that should provide access to improved broadband services for approximately 4300 properties, with a current committed timeline of April 2024.
24. Fibre equipment and cabling will be installed, with Openreach utilising the existing duct network, poles and street cabinets with the aim of keeping the civils works disruption to a minimum.
25. These plans are currently all still subject to survey, however Openreach’s target is to deliver to over 80% within each exchange area, and we will provide further details and updates as the building programme is firmed up.

## **Virgin Media**

26. As part of its UK 'Project Lightning' programme, Virgin Media are upgrading parts of its network to provide ultrafast broadband, TV and phone services to more residents and small businesses. We are in discussions with Virgin Media to confirm the details and phasing of York's inclusion with their upgrade project that was highlighted as approximately 1500 properties in their recent announcement.

## **Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) – Project Gigabit**

27. York are included within Lot 8 of the DCMS of a £5 billion government infrastructure project that has been established to provide access to ultrafast/next generation broadband services for the hard to reach homes and businesses.
28. The overall programme is running behind its initial schedule, and the current timeline for Lot 8 is indicating that the associated consultation, defined areas of intervention, procurement and award process activities will continue through to 2024 ahead of the build work starting.
29. Further updates and progress reports will be provided on all the above projects within this wide and varied programme of work.

## **Consultation**

30. This report forms part of updates to scrutiny to inform its future work plans.

## **Options**

31. Members can choose to simply note the report or note it and develop thoughts for further scrutiny enquiries.

## **Analysis**

32. There is no analysis as there is no formal council decision to be made on the content of the report.

## **Council Plan**

33. Any recommendations resulting from related scrutiny reviews in this area will contribute to the following Council Plan priorities:
  - good health and wellbeing
  - well paid jobs and an inclusive economy

- a better start for children and young people
- creating homes and world-class infrastructure
- safe communities and culture for all
- an open and effective council.

## Implications

34. There are no implications of this report as there are no formal decisions to be made.

## Risk Management

35. There are no known risks associated with the recommendations of this report.

## Recommendations

36. Members are asked to note the report and its content as an update on digital inclusion activities to inform views on any future scrutiny work in this area.

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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

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Report Approved  Date 05/09/2022

### Wards Affected:

All

### Background Papers:

None

### Annexes

None