ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 30 APRIL 2019

OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC DIGITAL ACTIVITY

ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of work ongoing across council services to support delivery of digital activity.   The strategic digital working group meets monthly to ensure that the cross cutting themes of infrastructure, services and skills work together effectively to support businesses, citizens and visitors. This work aims to deliver the council's objective to be a digital business and the Scottish Government's aim to make Scotland a world-class digital nation by 2020.   This report covers the period from 28th August 2018 to the 31 March 2019.

1.   NATIONAL DIGITAL PROGRAMMES

1.1   The Scotland Superfast DSSB programme exceeded the target of 95% of premises to have access to fibre by the end of 2017 (actual coverage 95.5%). This is in comparison to the Open Market Review and State Aid Public Consultation in 2012 which determined that commercial deployment alone would have only achieved 66% coverage.

1.2   The programme was delivered in two areas; The Highlands and Islands and The Rest of Scotland. Angus was part of The Rest of Scotland. The Rest of Scotland project is valued at £283m including £15.6m of gainshare funding with:

- £167m from public sources: Scottish Government, UK Government (Department for Culture Media & Sport), and all 27 local authorities that form part of the Rest of Scotland project area. The European funding was used to specifically benefit small to medium size Enterprises
- £116m from BT
- Scotland's 32 local authorities jointly contributed £40m to the programme as a whole

1.3   In addition, 14 of the Rest of Scotland authorities chose to further supplement their funding in the Rest of Scotland project, totalling £50.65m. The local authorities which have made additional contributions are: Aberdeenshire, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Ayrshire, Fife, Midlothian, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross, Scottish Borders, South Ayrshire, Stirling and West Lothian. Angus Council contributed £2m to this fund.

1.4   In total 15,801 premises in Angus will have been connected to this enabling fibre infrastructure by the end of this project. This programme will be superseded by the Reaching 100 Programme (R100) which will further extend coverage of Next Generation Access (NGA) Broadband to support the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver superfast broadband access to 100% of premises in Scotland.   R100 is currently going through procurement with anticipated announcement late 2018/early 2019.

1.5   Promotion of available services is undertaken by the DSSB programme team with support from the local area. At the end of 31 March 2018 uptake from premises who had decided to take up the superfast service was 38.96%. At the time of writing Angus sits at 48%. This has been as a result of awareness raising across social media, ad van promotions, community information sessions and information updates on our digital web pages.

1.6 The table below outlines the continued increase in access to fibre for premises.

	Baseline	Target premises with access to fibre 31 December 2017	Actual premises with access to fibre at 31 December 2017	Actual premises with access to fibre at 31 March 2018
Angus	69.7%	93%	92.7%	93.5%
Scotland	66%	95%	95.5%	95.7%

2. REGIONAL DIGITAL PROGRAMMES

Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN)

2.1 As part of the ongoing collaborative work across the Tay Cities Region, the Expression of Interest was submitted to Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) for Wave 3 of their Local Full Fibre Network Programme in November 2018. The total estimated project cost at this stage was £9.2m. The LFFN Programme aims to stimulate investment in full fibre networks by the Council installing Fibre Connections into selected buildings, therefore extending the fibre infrastructure into areas where it does not already exist, stimulating the private sector to build new, and extend existing, fibre networks using that infrastructure.

2.2 Early indications from meeting with the Commercial Panel at LFFN on the 7th March 2019 was that the submission was not suitable to progress to Wave 3 Investment Panel

Three options were therefore outlined:

- Continue with full re-scoping
- Continue with some re-scoping
- Withdraw from LFFN Wave 3 process

It has been decided to progress with option "Continue with some re-scoping".

2.3 Currently the submission is being re-scoped after advice from DCMS, the estimated cost has been revised to circa £5.25m to £6.0m.

2.4 If the bid is successful it would secure investment of circa £1.15m from the DCMS Programme in Angus with a completed delivery date of the infrastructure by 31 March 2021.

2.5 Completion date of the Challenge Fund Wave 3 process is presently unknown. The Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme has notified us of a temporarily halt to the Challenge Fund Wave 3 process.

Tay Cities Deal

2.6 The Tay Cities Deal sets out an ambition for the region to support economic development by developing world class digital infrastructure that is needed by both businesses and communities in urban and rural areas. To achieve this it will build on the existing commercial broadband focussed largely on the urban areas and the Government intervention through the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme providing broadband into the rural areas.

2.7 As part of the Tay Cities Region offer, Angus was awarded £1m (of which £0.5m has been committed to the LFFN bid) to support a rural connectivity programme that would enhance the ability for premises to connect. It has been identified that there is an opportunity to utilise radio broadband infrastructure to access hard to reach areas.

North Sea Region Interreg Like!

2.8   Work continues on the North Sea Region Interreg Like! project with a focus on digital culture, services and data and is due to complete in December 2019. The specific contributions this has made are referenced in the relevant areas of this report.

3.   DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1   As well as supporting the national programme for delivery of fibre Angus Council are working on a number of additional infrastructure projects to support connectivity. The council is utilising radio links/ fibre links and Wi-Fi to connect premises. This includes additional investment in masts and equipment to maximise connection. The council is also testing out opportunities to use newer technology such as [1]Television White Space (TVWS) to connect the most geographically challenging areas. Currently progressing testing TVWS between Birkhill Primary Schools & Liff Primary School – scheduled by end of April 2019.

3.2   Connecting Schools: Currently work is progressing with the circa £750,000 investment to provide dedicated internet connection to each secondary school and their cluster primary schools. This is be achieved via fibre and radio links. In addition, internal wireless access points in schools will be upgraded and increased where required, to ensure each building has sufficient coverage and capacity to allow the use of web-enabled devices and associated services. The success of this project will directly support the aims of the Children and Learning Digital Strategy to ensure our learning centres are connected and equipped to help create Angus citizens of the future who are suitably skilled in the use of digital tools.

The work connecting schools and businesses has been recognised nationally, and has been shortlisted for three categories at the REAL IT Awards (9th May)

- Operational Efficiency
- Project of the Year (<£250k)
- Modern Technology Infrastructure

3.3   Connecting Businesses: Kirkton Industrial Estate, Arbroath and Orchardbank Business Park, Forfar continue to provide radio broadband to businesses located with line of sight of both these sites and County Buildings. Ongoing engagement will continue over the coming months to increase awareness of the service available. The internet connections have been funded by Economic Development until March 2021.

3.4   Connecting Citizens: Farrpoint were employed by Angus Council to provide a report detailing the options for improving connectivity across the region (part of the scope was to ascertain appropriate technological solutions for the area) and also considers the influencing requirements of the Council in delivering digital services.   This report is currently being considered by the Strategic Digital Group.

4.   DIGITAL SERVICES

4.1   As a council we are working towards a vision for our digital services that they become so good that people prefer to use over the alternative channels. New or changed services will be digital by design, co-designed with a range of customer groups and will provide customers with convenient, easy to use, access to services.

4.2   Services can be measured to ensure that they are as efficient as possible in meeting the needs of the customer whilst delivering the service that is required. This will also allow us to

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[1] **White Space** refers to the unused broadcasting frequencies in the wireless spectrum. **Television** networks leave gaps between channels for buffering purposes, and this space in the wireless spectrum is similar to what is used for 4G and so it can be used to deliver widespread broadband internet

consider digital opportunities in conjunction with future capability like Internet of Things (IoT) which uses a network of sensors in objects to deliver services, and Big Data which uses the wealth of data that we hold to allow us to make evidence based decisions.

4.3   The council continues to deliver on a number of projects including:

- Webchat; which has been introduced and is currently being used to improve our service by letting us understand where customers are having issues on our website and establish how we can improve. Having launched this, we are now looking at techniques to encourage the uptake of this channel to further encourage the use of our digital channels.
- Report It; was has seen successful delivery of reporting against assets e.g. streetlights and roads which allows our citizens to report issues which are then sent directly to our services for action, removing layers of administration.
- Garden waste process improvement; based on feedback from one of our most used forms, we have made a number of improvements in order to make this more user friendly to ensure uptake of this service.
- Paperless council tax billing; at the time of this report we are in the process of going live with a system that allows customers to sign up for a paperless bill.

4.4   In addition to the projects above, the council has a large number of webforms live (currently 41), which enable customers to access services 24/7, and the Digital Team has been proactively seeking customer feedback to improve their usability. Based on this feedback, there are now guidance pages at the start of all of our online forms, online processes such as Applying for a Special Uplift have been improved and the online form for Apply for Free School Transport is being improved as part of the continual content review, based on user feedback and web analytics.

4.5   As part of our Process Redesign and Process Automation (PRPA) project the council has been redesigning processes to take advantage of new technologies and to completely automate processes such that little or no staff involvement is required. This has included customer facing processes such as Revenues and Benefits Change of Circumstance, which will also reduce back office staff involvement, and internal processes such as those related to engaging new employees which was a labour intensive manual task. The process for new employees means that less staff time is now involved, and new starts arrive with everything in place to start their job, from personal protective equipment, to their log-ins for IT systems.

4.6   The Garden Waste process is a good example of PRPA, as well as the drive for improvement based on customer feedback mentioned above. This year, significant work has been done to remove manual issuing of the stickers and labels to customers. This process is now fully automated from the customer requesting the service, to the sticker being sent to their chosen address without input from council staff. Based on customer feedback, this process will now support a 'rolling year' from date of subscription

4.7   In addition to the internal work above, Angus Council takes part in the Better Connected review which is a survey of local government websites. Angus Council Website gained 2 stars (out a possible 3) in the Better Connected review for accessibility. The team met with the Disability Forum to establish an action plan for improvement and work with the members of the group to assist with design and testing of the website. In order to formalise this work, we have recently commissioned The Shaw Trust to perform Website accessibility auditing, the results and action plan from this will be published upon completion of the audit mid-April 2019..

4.8   Angus Council has a large number of customers using our digital channels, and currently over 38,000 people have signed up to the online MyAccount. This provides a single sign-in for over 40 online council services, auto-completion of customer contact details on online forms and a way to manage all requests, subscriptions or payments through the MyAngus page.

4.9   Digital services are also important for businesses in the area and can deliver significant benefits for those in the tourism sector e.g. online booking, social media and marketing. The

work to improve and increase the physical infrastructure will allow businesses to maximise digital business opportunities.

4.10   The New Telephony System is currently in the process of being rolled out, with 2000 users out of circa 2400 users transitioned (31 March 2019). This work is on schedule to complete by May 2019.

4.11   The Housing Service is moving its customer portal online from summer 2019 for our 7600 tenants. This is also linked to 'My Account', and will start with service requests, repairs reporting and estate management monitoring. This will be followed by self-service housing applications and choice based lettings, as well as rent accounting and webchat functionality later in 2019.

5.   DIGITAL SKILLS

5.1   As technology and services transform the council is mindful of the need to ensure that everyone is supported with access to the right skills. This will include training for employees and the council will work with partners to improve digital participation and support those who are not digitally engaged.

5.2   Work with our communities across Angus in developing digital skills continues to be successful with an increase in the number of participants attending the Digital Skills Academy which offers free IT and employability training for job seekers. Those attending also receive an accredited qualification. Our Communities team in conjunction with Angus Alive has also developed an exciting digital volunteers programme aptly named 'Digi-Ken'. This will formally launch in early August 2019 and provides training and support to volunteers to help others across Angus develop the necessary skills, building capacity within our communities. This complements more formal provision through one-to-one provision or small group settings in cafes, libraries etc; providing practical assistance for people to deal with immediate tasks and learning opportunities that enable people to develop their digital skills without reliance on additional support.

5.3   To support digital skills in schools, there are programmes running across the themes of Digital Skills (staff and young people), Learning & Teaching, Leadership; and Infrastructure & Hardware.

5.4   Our Organisation Development team is working across the council to support access to e-learning for all employees with a current focus on employees who traditionally do not require frequent access to technology. This has included delivery of on-site training to employees by providing access to hardware to complete mandatory online training and in some instances increased support for one to one IT skills.

5.5   We continue to work with the Local Government Digital Office on our approach to essential digital skills (EDS) which includes a staff assessment framework. When this programme is rolled out we will use this to inform and target work going forward.

5.6   A "Digital Genius" programme has been started that will see a volunteer staff group from across the council come together to support their colleagues. This group will help to ensure that we have a co-ordinated and consistent approach to using digital tools and services and will ensure that staff groups aren't left behind as we transition to digital.

5.7   The North Sea Region Interreg Like! project has contributed to the above by supporting training, resourcing and development. Allowing us to provide training to our general workforce, as well as for individuals with specific responsibility, this project has also allowed us to appoint a Graduate Intern to support Organisational Development's 'Digital Genius' programme and a Communities Assistant to co-ordinate resources for 'Digi-ken'.

6.   DIGITAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

6.1   Communication of progress is vital. The communications team seeks to promote, and encourage others to promote, digital as a corporate priority. In recent months there have been a number of projects to share information regarding digital progress. These have included:

- Lunchtime learning sessions with staff to update them on digital mapping of services and an update on the progress of the national fibre roll-out via DSSB.
- Shared learning events to provide staff with information on digital transformation, connectivity, services and skills.
- Updates to the webpages. Information updates can be found at www.angus.gov.uk/digitalangus
- Featured case studies and fibre cabinet launches with Digital Scotland
- Regular internal communications featuring opportunities for digital learning in addition to digital developments on the intranet carousel and in the internal e-Newsletter Mini Matters
- A Yammer group dedicated to digital developments

6.2   Angus Council uses and will continue to evolve a wide range of communication channels both digital and non-digital, to reach our customers, citizens, partners, businesses and other key stakeholders. It is recognised and understood that not everyone uses digital channels to stay informed and/or engaged. However, the use of social media has grown exponentially over the past two years, and Angus Council needs to ensure that it uses this channel to the best effect.

6.3   Social media channels, when used in a planned and consistent way and as part of wider digital activity and within its full range of different communication channels, can make a significant contribution to the impact and success of the Council's corporate communications strategy. There are many benefits to using social media. It has the potential to drive active engagement and two way communication among those who chose to use these channels and can achieve a far greater and more targeted reach of audiences than is possible with traditional media.

6.4   Angus Council's corporate Facebook and Twitter feeds engage directly with nearly a quarter of local residents. Through the creation of engaging content, council messages are shared to a much wider audience and monthly figures see an average wider engagement of 50,000 Facebook accounts and over 400,000 Twitter accounts.

6.5   By building an audience, the council's messages will appear more frequently on the council followers' feeds. This means that messages are seen by the right people, at the right time. It also means that during a crisis, such as poor weather, our citizens actively turn to the council's Facebook and Twitter feeds for up to date information. This can be evidenced by last year's poor weather, known as Beast from the East, where the council's Twitter and Facebook pages saw nearly 1 million views of the resilience and weather messages over the three week period of adverse conditions.

6.6   To ensure that Angus Councils copy is attractive for followers, the comms team is working on creating more visually appealing messages through the use of short animations, videos and imagery. This year's budget animations saw an engagement of: 137,144 Twitter accounts, 2,500 clicks on animations and on Facebook a 23,000 account reach with 700 clicks on the animations.

6.7   The corporate Facebook and Twitter accounts also share news from across the council's other service accounts. This approach has raised the profile of smaller accounts and increased their follower numbers and citizen engagement.

6.8   The corporate social media accounts note an average of 350,000 unique visits per day. This figure has grown from 220,000 unique visits since March 2018.

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