



**CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
& PETERBOROUGH**  
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Agenda Item No: 2.1

## Connecting Cambridgeshire Strategy Review

To: Housing and Communities Committee

Meeting Date: 3 November 2021

Public report: Yes

Lead Member: Councillor Lewis Herbert

From: Noelle Godfrey, Connecting Cambridgeshire Programme Director

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Recommendations: The Housing and Communities Committee is recommended to:

- a) Approve the refreshed Digital Connectivity Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 2021-2025.
- b) Note and endorse the proposal to submit a business plan with delivery milestones for approval to the Committee in January 2022.

Voting arrangements: A simple majority of all Members present and voting.

# 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the proposed Digital Connectivity Strategy for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough for 2021-2025.

# 2. Background

- 2.1 Digital connectivity is hugely important for meeting some of the key challenges of our age, from sustainable growth to climate change mitigation to the management of scarce resources including water and energy.
- 2.2 Reliance on connectivity accelerated in an unprecedented manner during the Covid pandemic is still incredibly important as we move towards recovery, however at a time when access to healthcare, education and jobs has become increasingly reliant on digital connectivity it has also highlighted and exposed inequality of access.
- 2.3 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a hugely diverse area with a rich mix of cities, market towns and rural areas which presents both challenges and opportunities in achieving the leading-edge digital infrastructure needed for businesses and communities to thrive.
- 2.4 In January the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board earmarked funding of £6.3m as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan to 2025 to support the next stages of the digital connectivity programme
- 2.5 The Housing and Communities Committee reviewed the progress of the Digital Connectivity Programme in June this year and agreed a proposal to develop a refreshed strategy for the next four years for approval at the November Committee meeting.
- 2.6 The strategy sets out the high-level direction, targets and key workstreams for the programme, this will be followed with a detailed business and delivery plan to be presented to the Housing and Communities Committee in January 2022. The full strategy is included at Appendix A of this report.
- 2.7 The strategy includes a set of challenging targets that reflect the ambitions and aspirations of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority area alongside a multi-layered approach that is tailored to needs and priorities at a local level. Each area is unique with its own challenges and priorities, requiring a local approach to digital infrastructure planning.
- 2.8 Collaborative work with several of the Combined Authority's constituent Local Authorities is already underway to create local digital infrastructure plans, taking into account the geography, opportunities and needs in each locale. The 2021-2025 strategy will further develop this local approach, working with the each of the Combined Authority Councils to co-create a dashboard and digital infrastructure plan.
- 2.9 The strategy for the period 2021-2025 builds on the foundations of the multi-agency Connecting Cambridgeshire Programme which is hosted by Cambridgeshire County Council and which has been primarily led by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority since 2017. It incorporates multiple workstreams, targeting the different aspects of digital connectivity from broadband, mobile, 'Smart' technology and

public access Wi-Fi to ensure that the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority area has the leading digital connectivity infrastructure required so that:

- i. All businesses have access to the leading-edge digital connectivity needed to help them succeed and to deliver sustainable growth.
- ii. Communities, particularly in rural areas, are digitally connected and able to access education, jobs, health, social care and other public services.
- iii. Digital connectivity supports home working and remote training alongside other agile working practises, which can contribute to reduced commuting, less traffic congestion and more flexible and more inclusive job opportunities.
- iv. 'Smart' technology, including 'Internet of Things' based connectivity helps to provide ready access to real-time transport information and environmental monitoring, leading to increased use of sustainable transport solutions, reducing private car usage and contributing to a reduction in carbon emissions and meeting climate change targets.
- v. As a key part of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, businesses, communities and public services in our area are able to harness digital connectivity and advanced technology to support sustainable growth, good quality of life and a strong local economy with no communities left behind.

## Significant Implications

### 3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 As outlined in Section 2.4 above the current Combined Authority Medium Term Financial Plan includes provision of £6.3m for the years 2021-2025 (subject to approval). The MTFP for the years after 2022-23 will be refreshed and presented to the Board in January and the Digital Infrastructure business plan will align with that.

### 4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The recommendations accord with CPCA's powers under Part 4 of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2017 (SI 2017/251) and with the Committee's Terms of Reference as set out in CPCA's Constitution Chapter 10 para.3.2.9(b).

### 5. Other Significant Implications

- 5.1 N/A

### 6. Appendices

- 6.1 Appendix 1 – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Digital Connectivity Strategy 2021-25

## 7. Background Papers

7.1 None.