

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee – 3 December 2020

Subject: Manchester Digital Strategy

Report of: Director of Inclusive Economy

Summary

This report provides the background of the Manchester Digital Strategy's development, and its alignment to the city's strategic priorities. The appended presentation on the emerging Manchester Digital Strategy will be presented to the Committee at the meeting for their consideration.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the report; and
 2. Comment on the corresponding presentation on the emerging Manchester Digital Strategy.
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Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
The green digital sector and digital technology more broadly will play a key role in achieving Manchester's zero carbon target.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The digital sector is a large part of Manchester's economy and is one of the main identified growth sectors to 2025, both in terms of gross value added and job creation.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Digital skills are vital for our residents to access employment opportunities in the city, as well as to participate in day-to-day life.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The digital agenda is central to the success of other services, including health and social care and supporting people into work.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Digital is a key enabler to improve the city's liveability, sustainability and connectivity.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Increasing digital infrastructure is key to driving Manchester's growth and to being a globally connected city.

Contact Officers:

Name: Angela Harrington
Position: Director of Inclusive Economy
Telephone: 0161 234 3171
E-mail: anglea.harrington@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Dave Carter
Position: Digital Strategist
Telephone: 07710 496055
E-mail: dave.carter@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Elizabeth Mitchell
Position: Policy and Partnerships Manager
Telephone: 0161 234 1325
E-mail: elizabeth.mitchell1@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Manchester's Economic Recovery Plan & Update, Economy Scrutiny Committee and Executive (September 2020)

Digital Strategy – Project Proposal, Economy Scrutiny Committee (February 2018)

Developing A More Inclusive Economy – Our Manchester Industrial Strategy

Our Manchester Strategy 2016 – 2025

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview to the development of the Manchester Digital Strategy and its alignment to the city's strategic priorities. The appended presentation details the work to date to create the Strategy and its emerging priorities. The Committee are asked to note the report and provide comment on the emerging Strategy.

2.0 Background to the Manchester Digital Strategy

- 2.1 The Our Manchester Strategy 2016-2025 sets out the long term vision for Manchester. The Strategy states the priorities for the city, not just the Council. Within the 'Connected City' theme of the Strategy, there is a commitment to "create a framework for action as a digital city". Other We Wills also relate to digital skills, digital infrastructure and the digital economy. Consequently, a proposal for creating a Digital Strategy was developed and presented to the Committee in February 2018, detailing the proposed content and approach.
- 2.2 A strategy is required to drive the cohesive vision of digital across the city. As a cross-cutting theme that runs across economy, skills, infrastructure and sustainability, collectively achieving our digital ambition will be key to realising Manchester's ambitions. It is necessary to set out the unique challenges and opportunities Manchester faces as the conurbation core, and how the city will play its role in driving digital forward for the wider city region.
- 2.3 The important role of digital has been highlighted even further by COVID-19, with many services and everyday interactions more broadly moving online. Supporting all Manchester residents to be able to access opportunities digitally is key to building a more inclusive city.

3.0 Emerging Manchester Digital Strategy

- 3.1 The appended presentation details the work that has been undertaken to date to create the Manchester Digital Strategy and its emerging priorities. This has been developed following in-depth discussions with the local digital ecosystem, including key stakeholders in Manchester's digital sector and associated partners.
- 3.2 The emerging Strategy has also been informed by an evaluation led by Arup. The evaluation built on Arup's previous review of CityVerve - the UK's Internet of Things demonstrator programme which was managed by the Council – and considered case studies of other global cities' digital strategies and had a series of recommendations for Manchester to consider. The most relevant recommendations from this evidence base are included in the Strategy.
- 3.3 The proposed emerging Strategy is currently based around four pillars which align to the Developing A More Inclusive Economy – Our Manchester Industrial Strategy:

- Smart people – gaining and sustaining the skills, aspirations and confidence to be the foundation of Manchester as an inclusive and diverse smart city
- Smart places - digital neighbourhoods providing access, connectivity and support for all residents and businesses
- Smart prosperity – enabling the digital economy and ecosystem to grow and be more inclusive and sustainable
- Smart resilience – digital innovation being used for smart energy and mobility to support zero carbon goals and for deploying digital connectivity as a utility not just a commodity, which is accessible, affordable, open, innovative and future-proofed

3.4 The Committee are asked to consider and provide comment on the attached presentation and emerging Digital Strategy's priorities.

4.0 Strategic Alignment

4.1 As digital is a cross-cutting theme, strategic alignment is essential to ensure successful implementation of the Digital Strategy's aims both within the Council and across the city.

4.2 The current work being undertaken to create the Our Manchester Strategy reset has shown how digital is now considered a more important priority than when the Strategy was originally created in 2015. The Strategy reset engagement activity have captured the views of over 3,800 people on what Manchester should prioritise to 2025. Digital emerged as one of the top priorities, albeit with a different emphasis depending on the group. Residents stated that better digital infrastructure (specifically broadband and public WiFi) and accessible digital technology should be a priority to ensure access for everyone. Both businesses and partnership boards specifically referenced the need for residents to have digital skills to access local employment opportunities, alongside equal access to digital equipment and infrastructure across all the city. The Our Manchester Forum referenced that digital access is now often a requirement to access services so should be considered as a priority. The Strategy reset is currently being drafted; digital will be included as a priority for the next five years, providing a hook into the Digital Strategy as the detailed action plan for delivery.

4.3 Digital is recognised as being key to creating a more inclusive economy in Developing A More Inclusive Economy - Our Manchester Industrial Strategy, which aims to ensure the city's economy continues to grow alongside supporting all of our residents can participate and benefit from it. The city's digital sector continues to be one of our key growth sectors, both in terms of increasing jobs and gross value added. Whilst there are many employment opportunities in this growth area, it is essential to increase digital skills levels and improve digital infrastructure to ensure all of Manchester's residents and neighbourhoods can access them. The Digital Strategy will build on these priorities and provide actions to achieve them.

- 4.4 Manchester's Economic Recovery and Investment Plan highlights the strength in the city's digital sector, which to date has less affected than others, and the opportunities for investment in digital to stimulate the city's economy recovery. The Plan includes investment projects which focus on employers' demand for digital skills, increasing the city's full fibre digital infrastructure, and supporting digital industries. These will also be included in the Digital Strategy to ensure they are part of the city's priorities beyond COVID-19.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Following the Committee's comments, the draft Strategy will go out for public consultation in early 2021. This will include further conversations with the digital sector, as well as wider partners, undertaken in an Our Manchester way.
- 5.2 The findings from the consultation and the final Strategy will be brought back to the Committee for their consideration and recommendation for the Executive to approve in spring 2021.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and comment on the corresponding presentation.