Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee – 9 September 2021
Executive – 15 September 2021

Subject: Manchester's Digital Strategy

Report of: Director of Inclusive Economy

Summary:

This report seeks approval for the adoption of the Manchester Digital Strategy (appendix 1).

The Manchester Digital Strategy sets out how we will use digital and technology to meet the priorities of the Our Manchester Strategy and achieve our ambition of being in the top-flight of world-class cities by 2025.

Recommendations:

Economy Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment in the Digital Strategy and endorse the recommendation that the Executive adopt the Strategy as part the City's policy framework.

Executive is recommended to consider and adopt the Manchester Digital Strategy as part the City's policy framework.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
The Manchester Digital Strategy will directly contribute to achieving Manchester's zero-carbon target. This is addressed in the strategy under the theme "sustainable resilience" and includes priorities focused on using technology to reduce emissions and ensuring that infrastructure is resilient and future proofed. Some aspects of the strategy will result in an indirect reduction in emissions through increases in efficiency and productivity using digital tools.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Manchester Digital Strategy includes priorities focused on business growth, attracting investment and job creation in the digital sector.

A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The Manchester Digital Strategy includes priorities focused on employment, skills and training for residents to ensure they can access and benefit from opportunities in the sector.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Manchester Digital Strategy includes priorities focused on digital inclusion and on making sure that the benefits and opportunities created by an increasingly digitised economy are felt by everyone.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The Manchester Digital Strategy will directly contribute to achieving Manchester's zero-carbon target, and also includes priorities that will make the city a destination of choice for residents and businesses through high quality connectivity, digital services and digital infrastructure.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The Manchester Digital Strategy includes priorities focused on improving digital infrastructure and future-proofing.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

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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.

- Our Manchester Strategy Forward to 2025 – Executive, 17 February 2021
- Manchester Digital Strategy – Economy Scrutiny, 3 December 2021

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Given the increasing importance of digital and technology in our lives it was recognised that the city requires a strategy to bring together, plan for and harness the opportunities that technology presents to help us meet the vision for Manchester set out in the Our Manchester Strategy.

1.2 After working with a wide range of partners, colleagues and stakeholders from across the city we have developed the appended draft digital strategy. This report provides an overview of the work undertaken to develop the strategy, including consultation and engagement, its main themes and how they will be delivered.

1.3 The full strategy document and its appendices are appended to this report.

2.0 Background

2.1 Technology affects everything that we do and presents numerous opportunities to improve the lives of our residents, grow our economy, and deliver better public services. The increasing digitisation of almost every aspect of our lives means that it is crucial that we understand the role that technology can play in helping us meet the Our Manchester Strategy vision of being in the top-flight of world-class cities by 2025, with an approach that puts equality, inclusion and sustainability at its heart.

2.2 Manchester is already a successful digital city with many strengths. However we need to make sure that the benefits of these strengths are felt by everyone, and that we stay ahead of the curve in adopting new technology and digital practices. We also need to make sure that we use technology in the right ways to support and drive our ambition to be a zero-carbon city by 2038.

3.0 Purpose

3.1 The Manchester Digital Strategy is the vision for Manchester's digital future. It sets the priorities that our whole city – our public, private, voluntary and community organisations and our residents – will be able to work on together to make Manchester one of the world's leading smart cities and digital economies in the next five years. This means that it's a strategy for the city, not just the Council, and that we will need to work together with people and organisations from all over Manchester to make it a reality.

3.2 The strategy addresses the following questions:

- How can we make sure that people in Manchester have the right skills and technology to play an active role in the life of the city and its economy?
- How can we make sure that businesses and organisations in Manchester have access to the right skills, technology and infrastructure to be successful, sustainable and to grow?
- How can we make sure that Manchester City Council makes the best

use of digital and technology to promote a healthy and vibrant democracy with strong civic engagement?

- How can we use digital and technology to support those who are excluded, who are isolated or whose circumstances mean they face barriers to fully using technology?
- How can we make sure that Manchester continues to be attractive to digital companies and businesses looking to start up, invest or relocate in the city?

4.0 Development

4.1 In March 2021 MCC appointed an independent consultant in the role of "Digital Strategist", supporting members and officers by coordinating a work programme which included:

- Reviewing existing digital policies and projects and engaging with key partners and stakeholders to identify the opportunities and challenges that the city and its residents, businesses and community organisations are currently facing and what a new Digital Strategy could do to meet these.
- Identifying how data and intelligence on all aspects of life, especially matters relating to the future of the digital economy in the city, could be enhanced, e.g. through better data analytics and visualisation, and used to improve public service delivery at all levels.
- Imagining how a future Digital Manchester should look and how it could best support people in their day to day lives, whether in terms of work, social and cultural life and improving the quality of life for everyone.

4.2 Due to the impact of Covid-19, the role was re-focused to include considering how our digital capacity can best be engaged to reboot and rebuild our economy. We looked globally at how other cities mobilised their digital resources to respond and at what we might learn from that, both immediately and to support longer term recovery.

4.3 In parallel with this MCC commissioned Arup to build upon the work they completed in evaluating Manchester's CityVerve project which identified that Manchester is at a critical point in its digital transformation journey. This work with Arup was based on the recognition that the city needs to mobilise itself around the digital agenda in a much more coordinated way, in order to ensure that Manchester can harness the multiple benefits which new and ambitious approaches to digital can bring. This work will focus on why and how digital technologies are so critical to the city achieving its ambitions and what this could mean in practice, including bringing in best practice examples from other cities across the UK, other parts of Europe and globally. This work underpins the new Digital Strategy, ensuring that the city can maintain a competitive position in an increasingly globalised marketplace.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The new Digital Strategy is based on the results of engagement and

discussion with 63 partners and networks across the city during the past year. It also considers the recommendations from ARUP, which provided an external overview of Manchester's current digital policies and strategies.

5.2   An extensive consultation process took place from September 2020 to March 2021 with business, public and VCSE sectors and community organisations and networks. This resulted in many suggestions for new and innovative digital ideas for services and projects which have been incorporated into this strategy.

5.3   The consultation feedback showed that we need to:

- Support the continued growth of the sector in Manchester to enable a much wider growth of jobs, skills and innovation.
- Build on our success and incorporate the lessons learned from recent major projects including Triangulum, CityVerve, Synchronicity and SmartImpact.
- Build on our strengths in the grass roots networks of digital innovators, entrepreneurs and activists to challenge ethical, diversity and equalities issues.
- Continue to support the growth of the innovation ecosystem, especially in local universities and their partnerships with businesses and the wider community.
- Continue to support and grow Manchester's networks with other cities across the world, to enable the exchange of knowledge and ideas and the sharing of best practice.

5.4   In addition to the direct consultation on this strategy, in 2020 Manchester completed the reset of the Our Manchester strategy having undertaken significant engagement with people and organisations in the city. The findings of the consultation for this process showed us that:

- Our residents have a strong preference for prioritising equality and inclusion, making sure all people have the same life chances.
- Our residents want to make sure that everyone, especially young people, have the skills and experience they need to be successful.
- Our businesses want to make sure that we have the right infrastructure to grow and to compete globally.
- Our businesses want to ensure access to a highly skilled workforce with strong pipeline of talent.
- All groups consulted recognise the importance of digital, with a particular focus on inclusion, and that access to technology, infrastructure and skills as being essential to our future success.

5.5   A full list of consultees is appended to the strategy (appendix 2)

6.0   Delivery

6.1   The consultation and development process led to the strategy being divided into four themes. These themes are intended to align well with the city's

existing priorities, particularly the Our Manchester Strategy and the Local Industrial Strategy. The four thematic areas are:

1. **Smart people**: We will ensure that everyone can gain and sustain the skills, aspirations, and confidence to fully participate in the digital world; providing the basis for Manchester to become an inclusive, diverse, successful and ethical smart city.
2. **Digital places**: We will create digital neighbourhoods providing access, connectivity and support for all residents and businesses and digitally enabling enhanced health and wellbeing.
3. **Future prosperity**: We will enable the digital economy and ecosystem to grow, continue to attract new digital businesses & sectors and support a resilient and inclusive economy.
4. **Sustainable resilience**: We will use digital imaginatively for innovation to meet zero carbon and climate resilience goals and to create open inclusive connectivity with enhanced digital infrastructure as a utility not just a commodity.

6.2   These objectives are intended to work together. While Smart People is about our residents and workers and Digital Places is about Manchester itself, Future Prosperity is about connecting and harnessing our people and place themes to make sure they are truly beneficial to people and organisations in Manchester. Finally, Sustainable Resilience links the digital strategy to Manchester's zero-carbon commitments as well as considering how we plan for and respond to the changing nature of technology and digital services in the future. It is intended to keep Manchester at the forefront of technological change in a way that is sustainable and accessible to everyone.

6.3   The delivery of the Strategy will be overseen by a Digital Strategy Governance Board, comprising of relevant Council Officers alongside representatives from external partner organisations and networks. To achieve our aims and delivery our priorities, our next steps will be to:

- Establish a small Digital team within the City Council and reporting to the Director of Inclusive Economy.
- Develop a full action plan for the delivery of the priorities outlines in this strategy.
- Establish partnerships and working relationships with relevant stakeholders.
- Identify potential funding opportunities and build capacity to bring in funding to finance delivery.

6.4   The final strategy document will undergo design work to make it more readable and presentable to a wider audience following agreement on its content and adoption.

7.0   Contributing to a Zero-Carbon City

7.1   The Manchester Digital Strategy will directly contribute to achieving Manchester's zero-carbon target. This is addressed in the strategy under the

theme "sustainable resilience" and includes priorities focused on using technology to reduce emissions and ensuring that infrastructure is resilient and future proofed. Some aspects of the strategy will result in an indirect reduction in emissions through increases in efficiency and productivity using digital tools.