**Digital Strategy**

Project Brief

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| Background | This strategy has been formulated in response to:   * Telecommunications being one of the five priorities identified in the Gosport Infrastructure Investment Plan (Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, 2019) to facilitate a step change in the Borough’s economy. * The Plan also introducing the concept of the Digital Peninsula as a means of attracting residents and businesses to the Borough. * The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated channel shift towards digital/online customer service delivery and engagement, along with businesses, organisations and community groups operating online.   Teams within the council have also identified the need for digital resources to help facilitate/enable customer access to online services, especially for low income and older residents plus those residents in our hostels/sheltered schemes.  Access to online services can help empower residents by creating opportunities for social and financial inclusion. Digital access can also increase health and wellbeing by allowing access to online GP's, volunteering communities and many more services. |
| Project Vision | Our aim is that Gosport’s residents and businesses will have access to the digital connection that they need, in terms of speed and capacity, both now and in the future. They will also have the skills and access to any support needed to utilise that digital connection for their benefit. Thereby making Gosport a better place to live and work. |
| Alignment to Corporate Priorities, Strategies and Plans | **Current Council Plan/Corporate Priorities**  *Raise aspirations*   * Promoting digital careers and related career opportunities to young people and adults. * Promoting the importance of digital skills (along with other work ready skills) to pupils, students and job seekers.   *Empower residents*   * Providing access to devices and data, together with training and mentoring, to enable those in need to meet their everyday needs online e.g. applying for benefits; finding and applying for jobs; and connecting with family and friends. * Utilising community based facilities across the borough, particularly those in deprived areas, so that all residents have somewhere local and trusted to get help with digital inclusion. * Enabling access to Government and Council services e.g. Universal Credit and housing related. * Increasing financial inclusion e.g. via using online banking services to manage accounts (increasingly important with physical branches closing) and online price comparison research to reduce household related bills etc. * Improving health and wellbeing via online access to related service delivery, advice and support. * Improving access to employment and training related opportunities, particularly for those residents with accessibility related issues e.g. ability to work and train from home. * Increasing participation in volunteering opportunities via becoming a digital champion/mentor to fellow residents. Volunteering can assist with health and wellbeing as well as being a pathway into employment.   *Develop the economy*   * Facilitating private sector investment in the latest digital infrastructure and services will help make Gosport a more attractive place to live and work. This is increasingly important with the continued trend of hybrid working. * Promoting and providing training and mentoring so that businesses, organisations and community groups have the skills to operate online. * Establishing the Gosport Digital Peninsula Partnership to lead on the implementation and promotion of locally provided advice and support to residents and businesses.   *Deliver effective services*   * Encouraging and enabling more residents to access Council services online rather than in-person or via telephone.   **Emerging Council Plan/Corporate Priorities**  *Growing our economy, encouraging investment in Gosport and creating jobs, opportunities and affordable homes for local people*   * Raising the profile of the borough to encourage investment and build the visitor economy * Creating digital infrastructure in the borough and building skills and enabling digital access for local people and businesses.   *Being a council that works together with our partners and communities to get things done…*   * Regularly running resident consultations will be significantly assisted by having more people active online. * Establishing the Gosport Digital Peninsula Partnership to lead on the delivery of digital inclusion related initiatives.   **Gosport Infrastructure Investment Plan**  Telecommunications   * “Maintaining and enhancing Gosport’s digital connectivity will also form an important component of the overall infrastructure package available to businesses, supported by ultrafast internet connectivity providing a competitive advantage for businesses operating in the Borough.” * “In locations like the Gosport Peninsula it is important that telecommunications provision stays competitive with the wider Solent to prevent people from being discouraged to live there.”   **Gosport’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan**  Digital inclusion and maximising the benefits of digital technologies is the overarching theme of our £1m Government funded Investment Plan. As a result between now and March 2025 digital related interventions will be delivered against the three Government set priorities of communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills. |
| Objectives | This Digital Strategy has the following priorities:   * Digital infrastructure and service provision accessibility (facilitating and enabling). * Digital inclusion and service provision take-up/usage (enabling and promoting). * Digital skills and careers (promotion to young people and jobseekers). * The Gosport Digital Peninsula Partnership (establishing it to lead on and facilitate local digital inclusion related initiatives for both residents and businesses). |
| Outputs | In the short-term:   * Access devices and data, plus training and mentoring, for residents at the Council’s sheltered housing schemes and hostels. To be delivered as a pilot project to help inform future initiatives and outputs.   In the medium term:   * Digital skills training and mentoring for residents and businesses. * Community based hubs to enable residents to access devices, data and training/mentoring thereby reducing digital exlusion. * Tourism, cultural, historic and heritage assets promoted and accessed via digital technology to increase footfall/visitor numbers. * Businesses, organisations and community groups supported to operate online e.g. via grants and training. |
| Outcomes | * Increase in number of residents that are active online and meeting everyday needs by being so. * Increase in Businesses, organisations or groups that are active online. * Increase in residents participating in digital skills training courses. * Businesses participating in digital skills training. * Community hubs offering access and support to residents. * Residents gaining access to the internet via community hubs * Creation of the Gosport Digital Peninsula Partnership. |
| Benefits/  Dis-benefits | Benefits   * Empowering residents to access online services to increase health, wellbeing and financial inclusion * Social inclusion, especially for elder residents * Gosport has full fibre and mobile network accessibility * Resident and business access to digital skills training * Creation of Gosport digital peninsula   Dis-benefits   * Additional infrastructure needed for full fibre broadband may cause issues to residents * Health and safety/ mental health issues with having wider access to digital content, especially with younger people * Issues around access to illegal/malicious sites * Easier access to sites which may aid addictions, such as gambling |
| Constraints/  Assumptions | * Infrastructure needs to be in place for digital services to be offered to residents and businesses. * Timelines for installation of digital infrastructure across the borough are dependent on private sector providers. |