

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 5 November 2019

Subject: Strategic Projects

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Lion

Recommending:

That the report of the Strategic Projects Portfolio Holder be noted

Digital Innovation Zone

The DIZ continues to have enthusiastic support and funding from the 5 District Councils in Essex and Hertfordshire and Essex County Council. Both Hertfordshire and South East Local Enterprise partnerships are showing increasing interest in supporting the initiatives of the DIZ. There is a growing number of commercial and major businesses supporting the Zone emphasising the importance of this work and raising the profile of Epping Forest District Council in leading digital innovation. The DIZ team will be presenting to a forthcoming LGA Digital Showcase conference.

The appointment of a joint-funded Programme Manager for the DIZ on an 18-month secondment is being supported by the Council's recent appointment of a Higher-Level Digital Apprentice.

Work continues on the £2.1m DCMS funded DIZ Local Full Fibre Network project through their Assurance process. The focus remains on demonstrating that the project will deliver Value for Money and satisfy State Aid requirements. This assurance is targeted for completion by the year-end for operational planning and delivery to commence early in 2020. The project will deliver full fibre broadband networks throughout the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone based around the geographical locations of a number of public sector assets.

The DIZ website diz.org.uk will shortly undergo a series of upgrades to ensure that it acts as a vibrant and interesting single point of contact for all things of digital interest. These upgrades will enable the promotion of upcoming DIZ events including video content as well as a repository for all previous events the DIZ has delivered. It will be supported by the concurrent development of a social media presence for the DIZ.

Work continues to develop a Common Asset Register that will map the public estate across the DIZ as a baseline to attract future investment in digital infrastructure and to support digital initiatives and testbeds that can hang off the public estate. As part of the development of the register the DIZ intends to sign-up to the MHCLG Digital Declaration, plus constituent local authority partners and other partners as appropriate. This is intended to collectively unlock access to additional central government funding streams and joint working.

The DIZ made a decision not to pursue a bid to the DCMS Rural Connected Communities 5G programme. Given the complexity of the bid, the requirement for 1:1

match funding and the need to resource the management and delivery of any successful programme it was considered that the programme was outside the current scope of the DIZ. Additionally, the cost of securing consultancy support for the bid was likely to outweigh the potential funding available.

London Stanstead Cambridge Corridor Consortium

District members and officers continue to support the work of the London Stanstead Cambridge Consortium / UK Innovation Corridor. The district is leading on a major LSCC conference on digital innovation and applications in the zone from London to Cambridge, with a focus on the five district council areas. The conference will be held in London in February, sponsors and a venue are now being sought. Officers and members have had input into a number of key LSCC documents including the priority infrastructure report and the development of a skills concordat for the region. The districts role particularly in leading on digital delivery and other LSCC initiatives has been recognised with Cllr Lion being appointed as one of the LSCC's deputy chairs.

Strategic Parking Review

Parking charges for council owned and managed off street car parks across Epping Forest District Council were reviewed in 2018/19. In line with the commitment made last year and in conjunction with Cllr Avey a strategic review is now being undertaken across the District. This will assess those charges and the impact on change of use for long and short stay parking. Specific local charges will be considered along with the local plan policy on parking. The baseline income has been determined and the budgetary impact will be evaluated before any opportunities to flex the charges is considered. A longer-term view is to be evaluated to determine a more effective management arrangement though the use of state of the art technology and the potential use of automatic number plate recognition (ANPR)

Street Lighting Review

Views of town and parish councils were sort when officers addressed the Local Councils Liaison meeting in September. Chigwell Parish Council have agreed in principle, subject to contract, to have their lights on throughout the night. Contracts have been drafted in conjunction with Essex County Council and sent to the parish council. The contract will be for 4 years with a small annual increase to reflect costs. The general switch on has been planned for the new financial year but the plan is to bring it forward to the end of this year.