



WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY

WMCA Board

Date	9 March 2018
Report title	WMCA Digital Board
Portfolio Lead	Councillor Ian Ward - Economic Growth
Accountable Chief Executive	Deborah Cadman, West Midlands Combined Authority email: deborah.cadman@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7200
Accountable Employee	Henry Kippin, Director of Public Service Reform email: henry.kippin@wmca.org.uk tel: (0121) 214 7880
Report to be/has been considered by	WMCA Programme Board - 23 February 2018

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The WMCA Board is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the current progress and focus areas of the Digital Board.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 To outline the work undertaken by the Digital Board since it was established in 2017, set out its current membership, current priorities and focus areas.

2.0 Background

2.1 Whilst 'Creative and Digital' is one of our core transformational sectors in our Strategic Economic Plan, digital technology is transforming our key sectors in the region - advanced manufacturing, automotive, life sciences, professional services, construction, low carbon, transport, healthcare, and public services. The region runs the risk that, in the absence of a clear digital vision and a vibrant digital/tech eco-system in the region, which can fuel innovation across these sectors, those sectors will struggle to compete both domestically and internationally as other regions capitalise on the opportunities afforded by transformational technologies.

2.2 The Digital Board was formed in 2017 to ensure appropriate focus was placed on developing our digital focus in the West Midlands, and to bring together the various strands of activity that have already been operating across the region. Particular focus is on:

- Digital skills
- Digital infrastructure
- Development of our overall tech eco-system
- Data and digital government
- Marketing/communications and PR

2.3 The attached paper (Appendix 1) summarises the status of the Digital Board's composition, focus to date and its organisation around the key focus areas, as well as the priority areas in which it is progressing its work. Noted in this appendix is a commitment to ensure that the next phases of the Digital Board's work are developed in collaboration with our local authority and system partners – to ensure they are adding value and are strategically well placed.

2.4 In order to develop a sustained focus on Digital going forward, proposals were raised during the negotiations for the second devolution deal to include government funding towards our regional Digital ambitions. Government chose instead to set up a number of central government funding pots, into which we will bid to support specific programmes. We are developing our key propositions in this area currently. We are also currently investigating opportunities to seek funding for specific programmes from the Investment Programme, and will submit applications for such activities through the normal investment appraisal processes within the WMCA.

3.0 Wider WMCA Implications

3.1 The Digital Board aims to work with existing groups, structures and taskforces within the WMCA, to avoid duplication of work. In this regard a current focus area is develop a better link into the individual local authority heads of IT, to ensure awareness of our digital ambitions and the role they can plan in this regard. At this stage it is anticipated that this will commence with members of the Digital Board joining the next meeting of the LA heads of IT meeting, scheduled for mid-March 2018.

4.0 Financial implications

- 4.1 Progression of key priorities and next steps as set out will be delivered through collaboration and existing structures and resources. The appointment of the Chief Digital Officer at WMCA to drive this agenda forward will be funded from additional capacity monies announced in the November 2017 budget and which was included within the 9 Feb CA Budget approval report. As there was no direct Digital funding for work delivered through the November 17 budget, work is being undertaken to develop bid for central funding pots where opportunities arise or are available. This will potentially include bids into the CA's own Investment programme and which will follow the standard governance process. Where onward progression of initiatives and work programmes identifies unbudgeted costs, additional funding sources will need to be identified and reported back to Board for approval prior to progression.

5.0 Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report particularly as no specific proposals are being put forward for approval at this stage. It will be necessary to keep any subsequent proposals under review to ensure that they are within the legal powers available to the Combined Authority now or in the future. No specific delegations are being requested from the Board at this stage so proposals in the future may also require Board approval to implement but this can be considered as and when necessary through liaison with the Legal/Governance team within the Combined Authority.

6.0 Equalities implications

- 6.1 There are no immediate equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Schedule of background papers

- 7.1 None

8.0 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Digital Board Update Pack