

DIZ Matters



Summer Edition July 2019

Digital News and Views from around the Essex and Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone

New DIZ Board Members - The DIZ Board has been looking to expand participation from partners in the private sector. We have been happy to welcome Volker Wessels from Broxbourne BC and London Stansted Airport from Uttlesford to the Board. We have also been joined in the partnership by CGI who have been instrumental in the running of the DIZ 5G workshops and providing sponsorship for the recent Digital Inclusion Smart Places Seminar. We are in discussion with other private sector partners about joining the DIZ collaboration and we are hopeful that they too will come onboard. The last meeting of the Board was hosted by Stansted Airport and the next meeting will be hosted at St Clare Hospice. Officers have been asked to look at arrangements for future Board meetings given that the last meeting was attended by 22 partners. More on this to follow.

Meeting the 5G Challenge - The DIZ has had a long-standing target around achieving the status of a 5G rural testbed. This follows the awarding of significant government funding for a 5G urban testbed to the West Midlands Combined Authority. DCMS has recently announced its latest proposals for the Rural Connected Communities Programme which differ significantly from initial indications on the scope and funding available to each of the testbeds. DIZ members attended the South Workshop in Didcot in June to prepare the second DIZ workshop for a DIZ bid. The first workshop looking at potential use-cases was held on 14 June at Chesterford Research Park, hosted by Uttlesford DC, and led by colleagues from CGI. Partners suggested in excess of 60 potential use-cases on themes ranging from health through transport to education and tourism. This outline list will need to be reviewed against the revisions contained in the DCMS launch to ensure that an effective bid can be submitted by the DIZ. Officers are currently working with CGI to prepare the next workshop which will be held immediately following the formal announcement on the competition and the funds available. This is expected in the next 4 to 6 weeks.

DCMS Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) Programme - DIZ partners have been working closely with DCMS around securing funding from the LFFN programme in the district. A bid was submitted with support from partners across the DIZ geography and a positive response has been received from DCMS. The proposed project would deliver enhanced fibre connectivity to the Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone based around the geographical locations of a number of public sector assets. A number of operational issues are now being worked through with partners to understand how the project might practically be delivered and once this is established a process of assurance will need to be undertaken with DCMS before any practical delivery can begin.

Smart Place Seminars and Workshops - The fifth Smart Place Seminar was held on 26 April at Fletcher's Lea in Ware and hosted by East Herts DC. The event, led by the DIZ Community and Voluntary Services partners focused on social inclusion and digital. A range of national and local speakers shared their insight and expertise with approximately 45 stakeholders from the CVS sector from across the DIZ. The seminar report is now available along with the presentations delivered on the DIZ website at diz.org.uk/resources/. Colleagues have already started working on the second seminar in the social inclusion series, due to take place in September, at which a number of key initiatives will be developed in detail in order to pursue further support and funding for digital transformation.

New features on DIZ Website - The DIZ Board has always considered the DIZ website to be the primary tool for the promotion of the DIZ work programme and the area, as well as acting as a platform for resource sharing. With this in mind, and following feedback from partners, officer are working on a series of upgrades to the site to expand the information available and enhance the quality of the user experience. Updates include downloadable presentations from the Smart Place Seminars, access to a range of videos including those presented at these Seminars and others prepared by DIZ members to illustrate their own work programmes and access to the weekly 'useful links' online newsletter.

Smart City / Place Collaboration Initiative - The DIZ has always had a policy of looking out to learn from the success of other areas in driving forward and delivering digital innovation. Over the past month members of the DIZ have been in conversation with Birmingham Smart City Alliance about establishing an informal network of areas that are pushing forward new approaches in their respective places. Work is ongoing to host a first meeting of the group in Milton Keynes over the Summer. The agenda for this work will be sharing the experience of delivery in both urban and rural areas to assess which approaches and technology can be deployed with the best chances of success. An update will be provided in the next edition of DIZ Matters.

Gearing up for a Common Assets Register - Increasingly, Central Government is encouraging local areas to have a greater and more robust understanding of the assets that are held in the public sector in order to underpin and leverage in greater investment in digital infrastructure. Following initial work last year, including collaboration with market leading private sector companies, on the use of GIS systems for such a 'Common Asset Register' across the five DIZ council areas, the DIZ will again be exploring how this can be established and maintained effectively as part of the programme around a 5G DIZ bid. Clearly, the benefits of such a system would go beyond any individual bid for funding but could also provide the central platform for public sector organisations to develop 'One Public Estate' model for achieving greater return on current assets.

DIZ Plans First 'Digital Census' - In order to support a bid for 5G funding and the ongoing development of digital solutions, the Board has adopted a number of programmes to seek out more information about residents and service users experience of the impact of digital on their daily lives. The Smart Places Seminars on social inclusion are one aspect of this however partners are also exploring the use of market research techniques to better understand the needs, experiences and expectations of residents with regard to the increasing deployment of digital solutions. DIZ Board members have been in conversation with a leading international market research company to look at the potential of testing these issues in the DIZ area through a 'Digital Census'. Discussions around methodology, costings and sample sizes are ongoing and a proposal will be brought to the DIZ Board for consideration. It is hoped that this piece of research will, like the Digital Innovation Strategy, be funded by a number of different partners acting together to achieve better and more efficient outcomes and greater validity and reliability in terms of results.

To find out more about the Digital Innovation Zone Board, its members and its work please contact Mike Warr, Lead Officer for the DIZ Work Programme, at Epping Forest District Council.

Tel: 01992 564472 email: mwarr@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ

