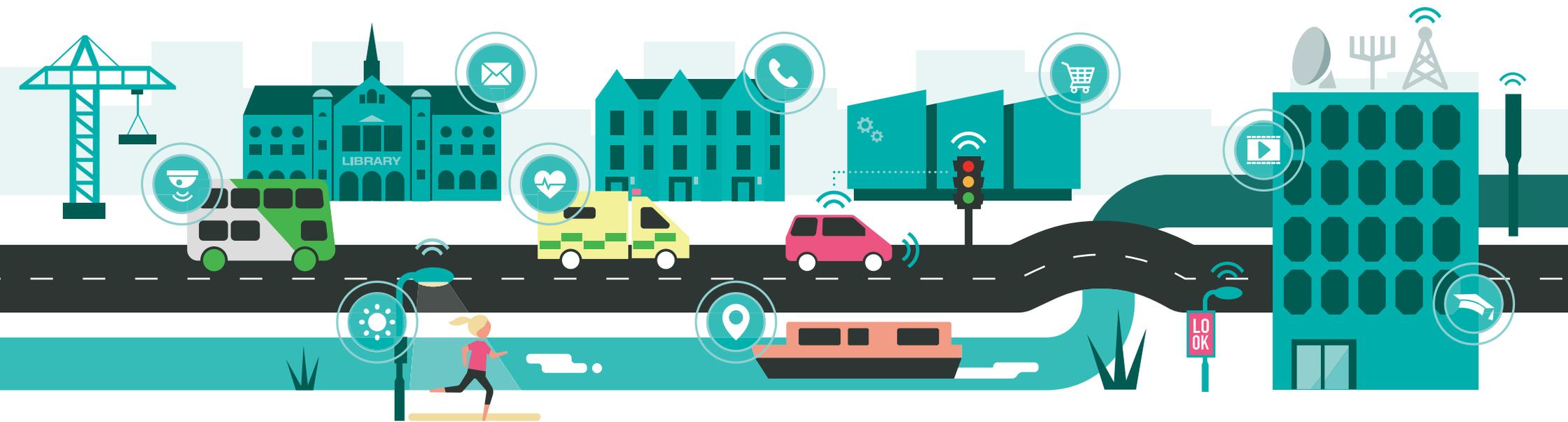


# Draft Digital Wolverhampton Strategy for Consultation





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## Foreword

Cabinet Member for Digital City, Councillor Obaida Ahmed, said: “The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of digital connectivity, however those without digital access or skills are being left behind.

The City of Wolverhampton is committed to digital inclusion. It is fundamental, not a ‘nice to have’ – that is why we have ensured that digital is an integral part of our Relighting Our City recovery commitment.

Digital is the primary means of connection, access to essential services and digital skills are crucial economic resilience and growth, providing a gateway to jobs, progression, social inclusion and cohesion.

It is crucial all residents can benefit by ensuring they have the devices and connectivity to get online and improve their life chances - we fully recognise how critical and life-changing connectivity can be.

As we enter into this consultation, we are seeking your views on our approach to Digital to ensure it improves our citizens’ lives for the better.

### Councillor Obaida Ahmed

Cabinet Member for Digital City



Councillor Obaida Ahmed attending "Get online, get connected" event at Central Library

## Background & Context

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our emerging Digital Wolverhampton Strategy draft priorities. We have engaged with internal and external partners/ stakeholders from a range of sectors and as a result of this work we have developed a draft strategy for consultation.

Covid-19 accelerated the adoption of digital services by several years\* – including remote working, remote learning, telehealth, ecommerce – and is considered critical to level-up our economy to power economic and social recovery. Driven by digital, this draft Digital Strategy sets out our work to date and outlines our bold and ambitious approach to harnessing the power of digital and data to make our citizens' lives better.

Over the last few months, we have been considering and developing ideas to improve our digital approach, to achieving our aims of:

- Becoming a Smart City
- Ensure a 100% digitally included Wolverhampton
- To support a growing Digital Economy

Embrace the new evolution in fixed and mobile technology 5G addressing the demand for faster data speed, on the move video streaming and instant access. It supplements networks to deliver and uninterrupted mobile experience.

This consultation document will provide information so that you can understand our vision and aims for digital.

We want to hear what you think of our draft strategy.

To have your say, please email [digital.wolves@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:digital.wolves@wolverhampton.gov.uk) or complete the online survey.

\*COVID-19 digital transformation and technology survey results (McKinsey)(2020)

# Introduction

The Digital Wolverhampton Strategy sets the framework (and updates the **Wolverhampton Digital Infrastructure Strategy**) as a live, action orientated partnership approach to delivering our overarching aims:

- **Wolverhampton is a Gigabit and Smart City** with futureproofed digital infrastructure including full fibre broadband and 5G utilised to transform delivery of services and develop new applications to unlock its potential.
- **100% digitally included Wolverhampton** ensuring all residents have the access to devices, connectivity and skills to take advantage of what digital has to offer
- **Growing the Digital Economy** and talent pipeline building on our futureproofed infrastructure to start and grow businesses creating jobs for local residents meeting skills needs for the future.

Futureproofed Digital infrastructure is the backbone of a modern thriving economy driving productivity and spreading growth and in delivering effective and efficient public services. Covid-19 accelerated the adoption of digital services by several years which are considered critical to level-up our economy to power economic and social recovery.

The City of Wolverhampton adopted the Wolverhampton's Digital Infrastructure Strategy in January 2020. Its proactive approach to supporting the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure is proving effective with the commercial rollout of full fibre broadband and 5G across the city underway, connecting residents and businesses to Gigabit Connectivity.

To maximise the benefit locally, we need to tackle the digital divide supporting residents to get online, improve digital skills, support businesses to digitalise and introduce smart technology to support the delivery of services. Going forward, digital needs to be considered the 4th utility.

The Digital Wolverhampton Strategy centres around five themes which our Data Strategy will cut across:



Digital Infrastructure



Digital Inclusion



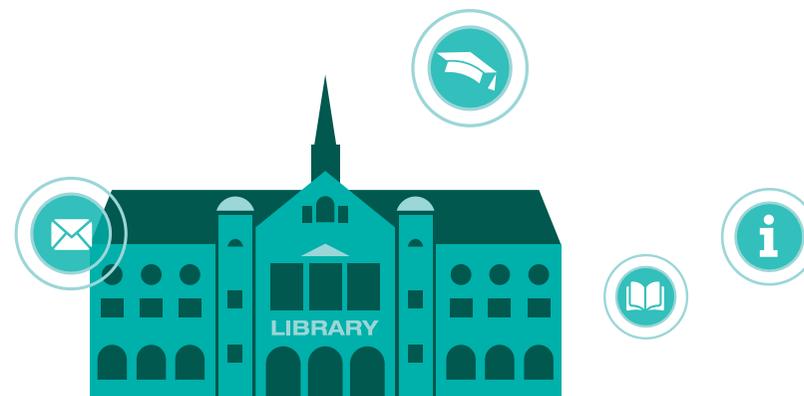
Digital Innovation



Digital Economy (Business)



Digital Economy (Learning, Skills and Jobs)



## Strategic context

A sustainable digitally inclusive city is a key element of the vibrant green city we can all be proud of, in the **Wolverhampton Council Plan** digital connectivity for local people and businesses and improve digital infrastructure to deliver smart technology and connectivity for all.

‘Driven by digital’ is a cross cutting theme in our **Relighting Our City** recovery commitment with Digital transformation critical to **Relighting Our Council**, underpinning work on assets, agile working and service redesign and across all key priorities.

**West Midlands Digital Roadmap** was developed in recognition that digital connectivity is going to be vital to our economic bounce back. It is the golden thread that links all of our industries – Advanced manufacturing, automotive, life sciences, professional services, construction, low carbon, transport, healthcare, public services - all are being transformed by the power of digital technologies. Ensuring all our citizens are equipped to play a full part in, and benefit from this transformation is a shared endeavour.

### West Midlands Digital Roadmap missions:

- Securing access for everyone to digital opportunities, particularly those in poverty
- Sharing and using data to improve people’s lives
- Becoming the UK’s best-connected region
- Realising the potential of digital to transform our economy and build economic resilience
- Using digital public services to build a fairer, greener and healthier region

Nationally, ‘**Project Gigabit**’ is the government’s national mission to deliver lightning-fast, reliable broadband for everyone in the UK by ensuring more than one million hard to reach homes and businesses will have next generation gigabit broadband built to them in the first phase of a £5 billion government infrastructure project, however the focus of funding is on the last 10% in rural areas.

## Digital Wolverhampton Partnership

### Digital Wolverhampton Partnership comprises of:

- City of Wolverhampton Council
- Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust
- University of Wolverhampton
- City of Wolverhampton College
- Wolverhampton Homes
- Wolverhampton CCG

The purpose of the Digital Wolves Partnership is to develop Wolverhampton's approach to digital including infrastructure, innovation and inclusion providing strategic leadership for digital across the City

- Support the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure
- Develop a Smart Vision utilising digital innovation in delivery of services
- Develop a digital innovation plan for the city including 5G use cases
- Make Wolverhampton a 100% digital included city
- Capturing other elements of digital including our partners digital visions, tackling key priorities such as youth unemployment and climate change and supporting the growth of the digital economy ensuring a talent pipeline for future growth.



# Digital aims



## Infrastructure

Remove Barriers to rollout of futureproofed infrastructure

Standardise Processes embedding as business as usual

Implement policies including planning and dig once

Address connectivity issues

Regional lobbying to fill gaps



## Inclusion

Wolves Online  
Wolves Tech Aid

Individualised Support

Digital Champions

Devices for children & young people

Place based approach

Address data poverty



## Innovation

Smarter decision making

Tech enabled service delivery

Tech enabled quality of life & health

Address key challenges through tech

Leading Smart City

Skills for digital innovation



## Economy

Business Support & Enterprise

Support e-commerce and online trading

Digital leadership and workforce skills

Support innovation in key sectors and the supply chain

Grow the tech sector



## Skills & Learning

Digital Wolves Infrastructure Academy

Digital bootcamps

Improve workplace digital skills

Attract and retain talent

Develop Digital Wolves website

With digital moving at a fast pace, detailed actions plans will be developed to support our aims and delivery. Action plans will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.



## Digital infrastructure

**VISION**  
Gigabit  
City

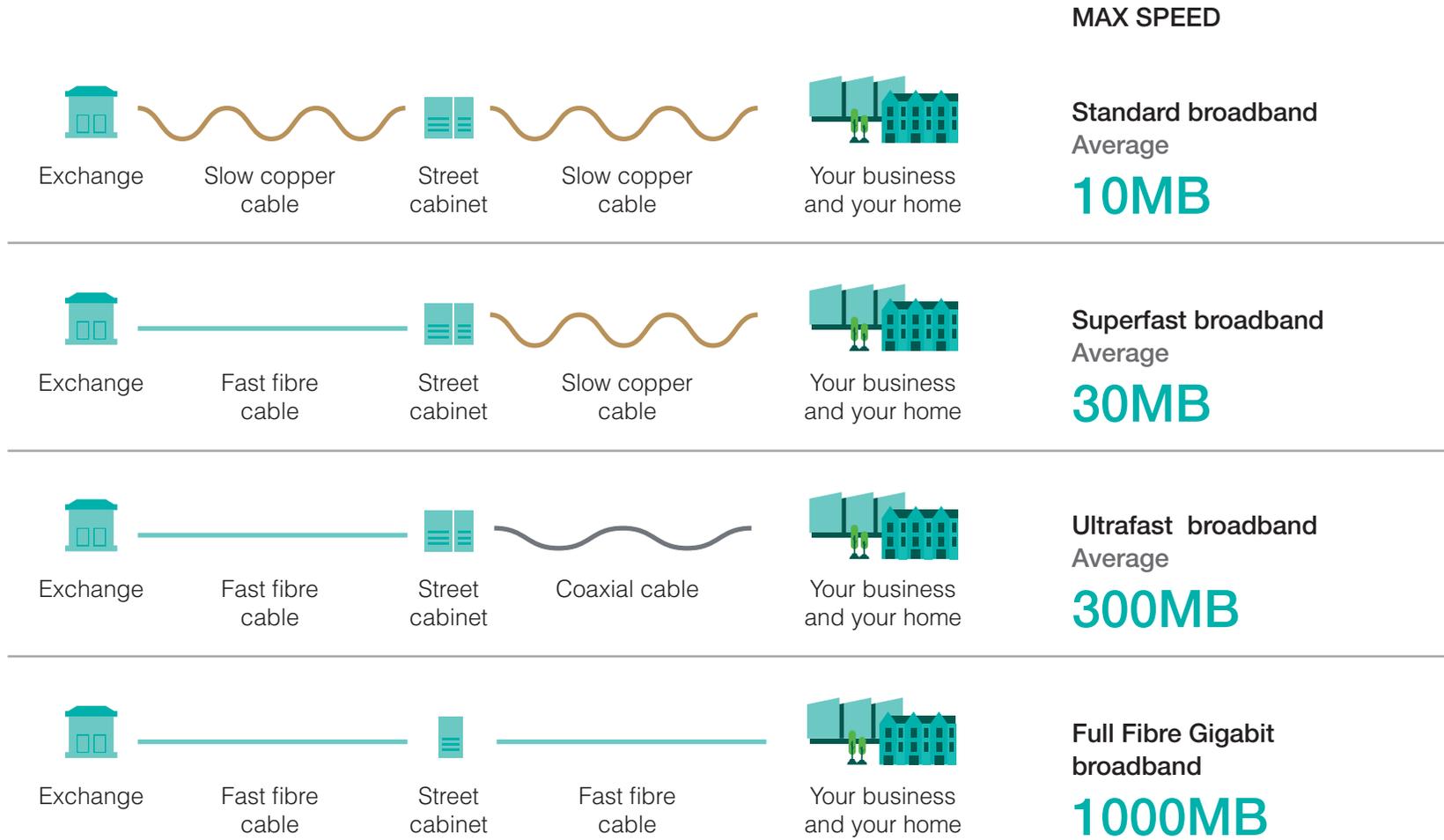
### BACKGROUND

Despite good coverage of both superfast (99.4%) and ultrafast (93.32%) broadband, there were gaps in coverage especially in the city centre with only 1.87% of Wolverhampton was connected to full fibre broadband, less than many rural areas.

Wolverhampton adopted its Digital Infrastructure Strategy in January 2020 in recognition that futureproofed digital infrastructure is essential in achieving the city's digital ambitions including a commitment to support and remove barriers to the rollout of full fibre and wireless infrastructure.

Embrace the new evolution in mobile technology 5G addressing the demand for faster data speed, on the move video streaming and instant access. It supplements networks to deliver and uninterrupted mobile experience.





**Note:** These are sourced from Ofcom although there are different definitions used by Ofcom and UK Government

## PROGRESS

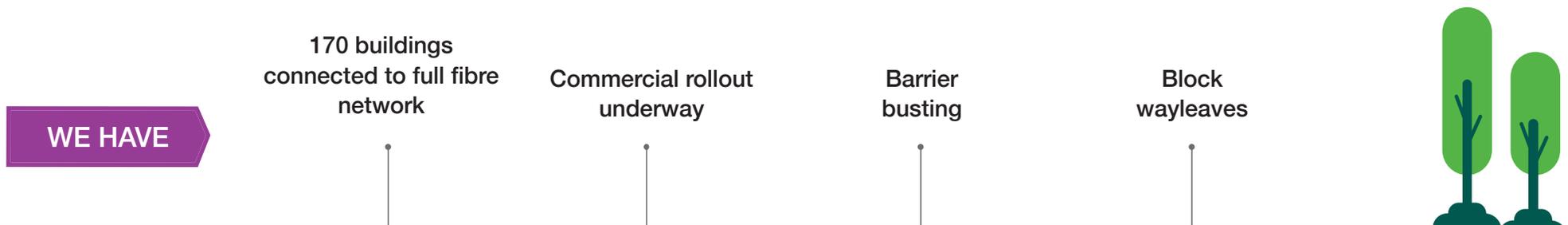
170 public sector buildings including council and Wolverhampton Homes offices, libraries and schools have been upgraded to full fibre broadband. Significant progress has been made with the commercial rollout of full fibre broadband underway and all four Mobile Network Operators rolling out 5G in the city with our proactive approach accelerating deployment of 5G by at least 6 months.

### Support

To support the commercial rollout of full fibre broadband across households and businesses across the city, the council has adopted non-exclusive block wayleaves to facilitate the rollout of full fibre across housing estates in Wolverhampton, developed a planning toolkit to ensure full

fibre is provided in new housing and commercial developments and specific full fibre and 5G policies in the Black Country Core Strategy. In addition, a dig once approach has been introduced to ensure ducting/fibre is installed as part of local public realm and regeneration projects.

To support the rollout of 5G, the Council (working with WM5G) has introduced new systems to support the rollout including identifying suitable assets viable for telecoms uses, agreeing a commercial model to facilitate the rollout and improving access arrangements including standardised wayleaves and leases.

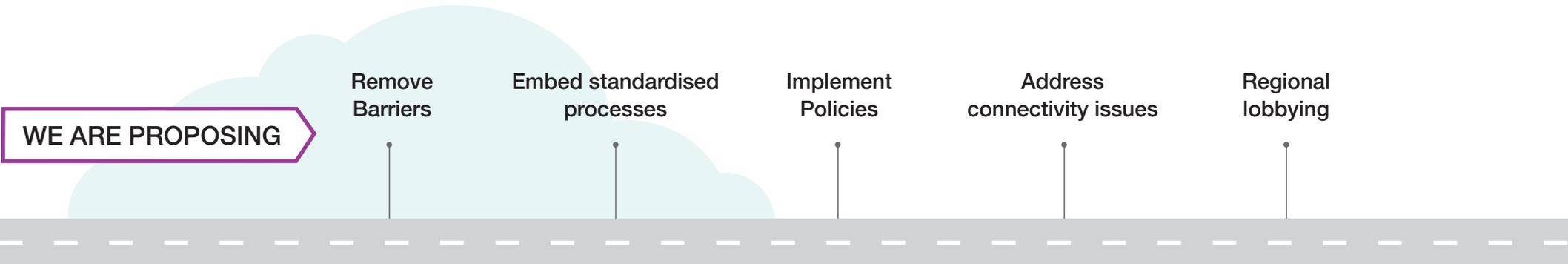


A new transparent process has been introduced for planning applications for 5G Masts including pre-application discussions with Planning re siting and appearance. We are also making available our street furniture on a non-exclusive basis to facilitate the rollout of Small Cells and upgrading our streetlights to Smart as part of the rollout of LED leading to energy and carbon savings.

However, this proactive approach needs to be maintained to ensure that all residents and businesses can benefit from futureproofed digital infrastructure including lobbying to ensure that areas will not be “locked out” of the commercial rollout.

## WE ARE PROPOSING

1. Proactively develop approaches and **remove barriers** to accelerate the rollout
2. Embed new standardised **processes and agreements** to support the rollout of 5G as ‘business as usual’
3. Implement **policies** that support the rollout including planning, dig once and block wayleaves
4. Explore innovative means of **addressing connectivity issues** supporting other themes such as community public WiFi
5. Support **regional lobbying** to address gaps including broadband vouchers for ‘locked out’ areas





## Digital Inclusion

### VISION

100% digitally  
included city

### BACKGROUND

An estimated 11,659 households in Wolverhampton are without broadband<sup>1</sup> however there are an estimated 118,000 limited and non-users of the internet in Wolverhampton<sup>2</sup>. Although age is the biggest indicator, 44% of those that are offline are under the age of 60.

Although motivation and skills are a key factor, another issue was access to devices and connectivity, often due to data poverty. Covid-19 highlighted the extent of the issue with many residents unable to access online learning, employment support and access to services including health. Schools reported lack or unsuitability of devices for pupils to access remote learning and challenges around connectivity. There is a strong correlation with more deprived areas and particular groups.

**11,659<sup>1</sup>**

Wolverhampton  
households without  
broadband

**118,000<sup>2</sup>**

limited and  
non-users of  
the internet

**44%**

of people offline  
are under  
60 years old

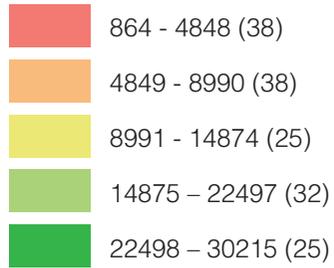
1 Point Topic  
2 Good Things Foundation

### RELATIVE RISK OF NON-ADOPTION, ENGLAND RANKING (Point Topic, 2020)

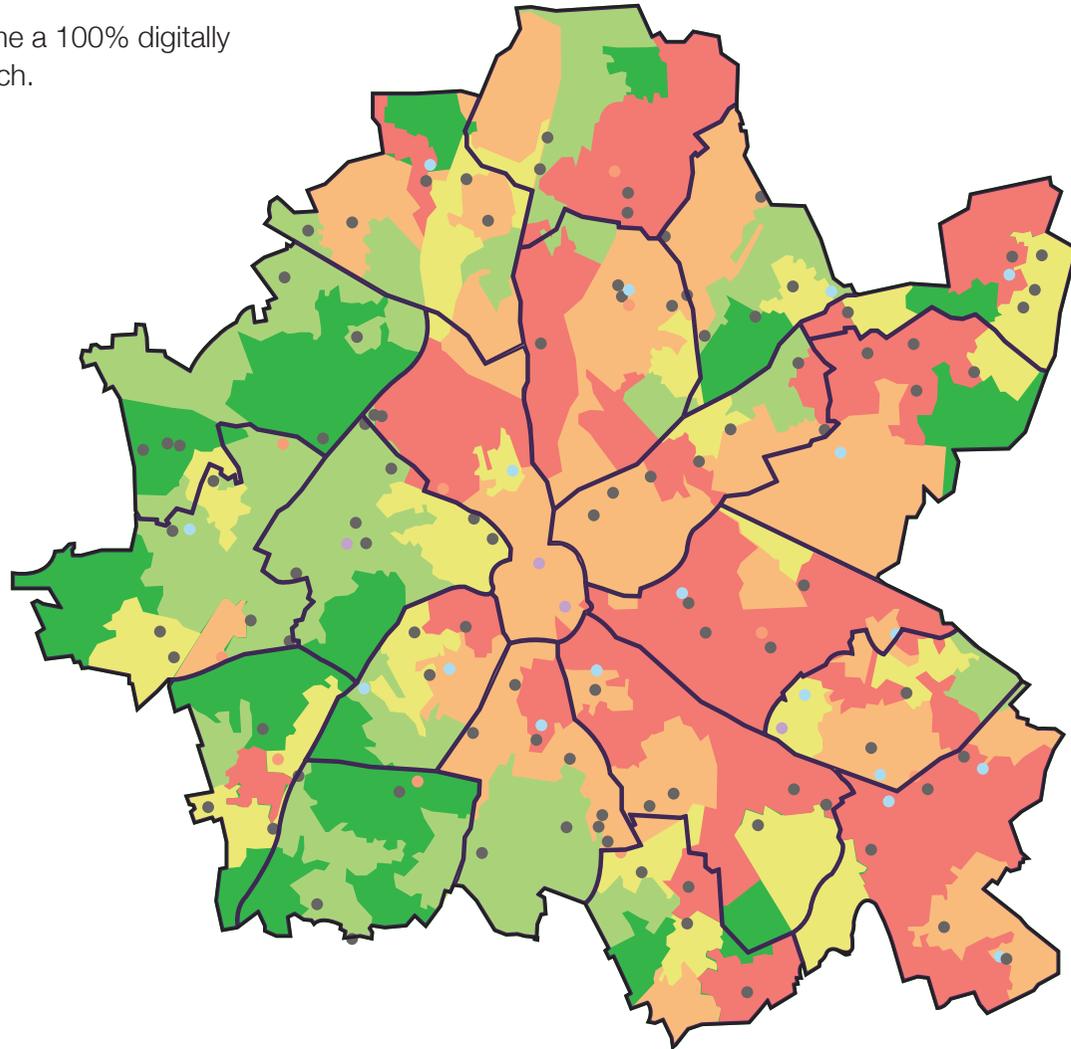
Map linked to Point Topic research around digital deprivation.

Our ambition is for Wolverhampton to become a 100% digitally included city linked to a place based approach.

#### Point Topic Nat. Rank



#### Type



## PROGRESS

### Devices and Connectivity

The city developed **Wolves Online**, a device and connectivity lending scheme targeting residents to access online learning, employment support, access services and reduce isolation through a number of trusted partners, complementing devices distributed by Online Centres through the Good Things Foundation **DevicesDotNow**. Schools, Adult Education, the College and other providers lent out devices to their learners so they could continue to access learning during lockdown. The city also lent out **devices and connectivity to schools** so that pupils could access remote learning topping

up the national DfE scheme funded through ward funds and donated BT hotspot vouchers. A local MP and tech company Learnplay, supported by the Council and Wolves Football Club, established **Wolves Tech Aid** a device recycling scheme aimed at providing devices to children. Public WiFi has been mapped providing a hybrid approach to connectivity.



## Support

Online Centres and Community Voluntary Organisations across the city, part of the Wolves Online trusted partner network, have provided **support to get people online and improve digital skills** of residents and progress to essential digital skills provision. As the Wolves Online scheme expanded to a larger number of trusted partners, a consortium of experienced trusted partners was commissioned to **build capacity** of other trusted partners to support residents get online including production of a resource pack. The NHS has worked jointly with colleges to develop digital skills training centred around the NHS App. Support for Universal Credit claimants includes Help to Claim and Clickstart.

## Challenges

Due to the sheer scale of the challenge to ensure **100% of Wolverhampton's residents are digitally included**, our approach must be **scaled up** to meet the needs of our residents with the motivation for engagement and nature of devices reflecting individual needs and the process being as easy as possible with devices being set up and individualised intensive support being available to support residents get online. Connectivity remains a huge issue - despite good broadband coverage, many residents are unable to afford connectivity to get online so we need to explore options for residents getting online including fixed and mobile **connectivity options** ensuring sufficient connectivity to meet the needs of residents.

Support people  
to get online

Improve  
Digital Skills

Trusted Partner  
Network



## WE ARE PROPOSING

1. **Scale up Wolves Online** device and connectivity lending scheme to reach more residents taking into account individualised needs in relation to type of devices and connectivity options, through increasing the number of devices and expanding the network of Trusted Partners capturing diverse groups and communities.
2. Continue to support and promote **Wolves Tech Aid** including working with anchor institutions/private sector and crowdfunding to recycle end of life devices and distribute to children, young people and residents to enable them to get online.
3. **Develop longer term options** relating to access to devices including extending loan periods and selling/permanent gifting devices for residents who have gone through the Wolves Online and similar schemes.
4. Ensure **individualised support** to support residents to get online, address confidence, motivation and improve their digital skills including progression to essential digital skills and address barriers such as technical and safety concerns, proactively seek funding for trusted partners through initiatives such as Online Centres Network and West Midlands Digital Catchup.

WE ARE PROPOSING

Scale up  
Wolves Online

Promote  
Wolves Tech Aid

Provide  
individualised support

5. Scale up support for residents through developing a **Digital Champion** scheme recruiting volunteers to support residents in the community building on Digital Buddies and Libraries volunteer scheme.
6. **Work with schools** to establish a network of digital champions and consistent offer of support for all children and young people
7. Establish a **place-based hybrid support** both at home and within trusted partners/digital hubs.
8. **Address data poverty** through exploring more affordable fixed connectivity options, for example Broadband co-operatives, collective broadband switch, lobbying fixed network providers for a basic, cheaper broadband packages and opportunities for more affordable mobile connectivity e.g. lobbying MNO's – CSR donations, bulk buy, data banks.

Develop Digital Champion  
Network



Work with  
schools



Place based  
approach



Address  
data poverty





## Digital Innovation

### VISION

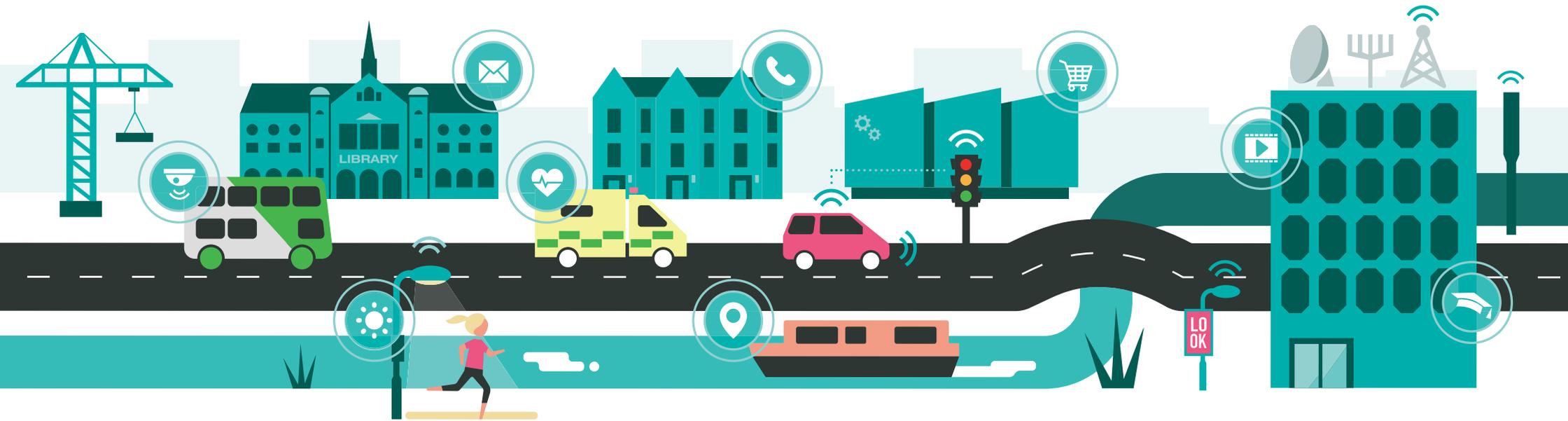
Better services,  
better quality of life,  
driven by digital

### BACKGROUND

The development of futureproofed digital infrastructure opens up significant opportunities to transform delivery of services and development of new applications to unlock its potential.

A smart city is an urban area that uses different types of Internet of things (IoT) sensors to collect data and then use these data to manage assets and resources efficiently.





1

City wide fibre platform providing open access bandwidth to unlock smart city benefits

2

City wide connection to all public sector buildings, commercial and residential buildings with full fibre connectivity benefits

3

Smart city site additions including 5G connectivity on street furniture allowing faster data speeds and instant access

4

Enablement of 5G and IoT connecting sensors and devices to facilitate transmission of data for enhanced decision making and automation

5

Smart application deployment, connectivity, engagement and inclusion to unlock smart city benefits

## PROGRESS

### **City of Wolverhampton partners are proactively integrating digital innovation in the delivery of services and priorities:**

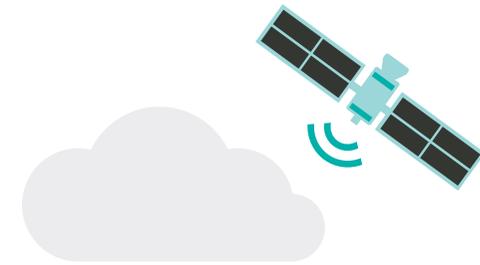
**City of Wolverhampton Council** will be adopting it's internal digital strategy and are proactively integrating digital to drive and deliver efficiency via innovative technology, put the customer and city first and deliver in an agile and responsive manner, increase partnership collaboration, provide responsible technical architecture to deliver programmes and positive outcomes; and provision for governance, security, data, network and business continuity. Initiatives include master data management – recording customer interactions and behaviours, cloud-based storage solutions, my Account records and exploring opportunities such as 3D planning and addressing key challenges with technology. We have introduced reminiscence interactive therapy and activities (RITA) in care homes.

The **NHS** are exploring the potential of digital innovation around data, prevention and delivery of services. Initiatives include developing an integrated care system and 5G use cases including a 5G Care Home Project connecting a GP in Bilston to a local care home offering video consultation, diagnostic tools and capturing vital sign information to allow for early identification of issues and endoscopy pilot.

The **University of Wolverhampton** has ambitious plans to transform Wolverhampton Science Park into a Centre for Digital Innovation for Smart Cities (DISC) including 10 innovation labs, 5G Innovation Hub and Wolverhampton Cyber Security Institute and is shortlisted to host a 6G summit. The Science Park is also home to one of the three 5prinG Application Accelerators that help organisations harness the power of 5G to deliver growth and innovation offering cutting-edge facilities and expertise can help public and private companies to understand 5G, its applications and support to unlock its potential. 5prinG is focusing on key Smart City challenges: health & social, public service delivery & reinvigorating the high street.

**Wolverhampton Homes** is exploring an opportunity to pilot a Connected Tower Block by replacing the intercom solution with a solution that integrates smarter door entry with smart building technologies and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, working jointly with the NHS for Smart Health and Council on technology enabled independent living with devices provided to each home to address digital inclusion.

The **City of Wolverhampton College** will be moving into a state-of-the-art purpose built complex incorporating digital within its infrastructure. Digital systems are being introduced to track students and use Artificial Intelligence (AI) to support students with timetabling, setting work and with wellbeing checks.



## WE ARE PROPOSING

- Utilise data to make smarter decisions enabling better targeting and delivery of services
- Develop digital roadmaps for city priorities setting out how we will use technology to innovate services including:
  - Technology enabled service delivery making better and more efficient services
  - Technology enabled independent living and health to improve quality of life, prevent and manage health conditions
- Addressing key challenges and priorities through technology
- Become a leading Smart City for the future
- Ensure digital skills of workforce to embrace and implement digital innovation solutions.

WE ARE PROPOSING

Make smarter decisions

Technology enabled service delivery

Improving quality of life

Address challenges

Smart City



## Digital Economy (Business)

### VISION Digital City (Business)

### BACKGROUND

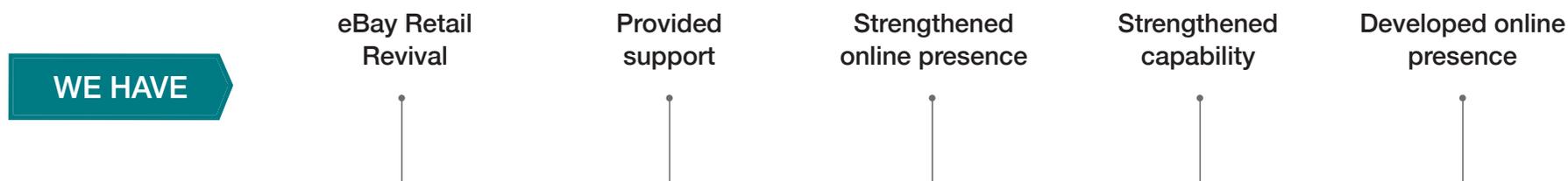
Covid-19 accelerated the adoption of digital by several years - including remote working, remote learning, telehealth and ecommerce - with digital considered critical to level-up our economy and power economic and social recovery. Economic intelligence has shown that during the pandemic 76% of Small-Medium Businesses relied on digital and 52% used digital to sell more and stay connected. Covid-19 has shown us that businesses that have been able to channel shift to online trading and secure online customers are more successful and resilient. The digital shift to online trading is here to stay. However, many smaller businesses and entrepreneurs do not have the skills, capabilities and/or access to technologies to do this efficiently.

Tech is becoming more important for the UK economy. Nationally, the rate of tech GVA contribution to the UK economy has grown on average by 7% per year since 2016 generating nearly three million jobs. The City's futureproofed digital infrastructure provides a good foundation for Local Digital Capital, the building blocks for strong place-based digital technology ecosystems. The West Midlands currently perform well on infrastructure, R&D and trade compared to other regions, but performs less well on skills, adoption and finance & investment, therefore these are key areas the City must address in order to benefit from the growth of the Tech sector. The 2018 Tech Nation Report identified Wolverhampton and Walsall as having seen an increase in Digital Start-ups by 422%. Digital also offers huge opportunities to grow key sectors such as creative tech and green tech as identified in Wolverhampton Pound.

## PROGRESS

Prior to Covid-19, the city partnered with eBay to support 60 businesses to get online through the **eBay Retail Revival** programme. Businesses involved in the programme reached £7m in sales with an average growth rate of 33% with sole traders enjoying a growth rate of nearly 100%. A survey of buildings found 58% had hired or plan to hire more staff, 51% had expanded their businesses premises or plan to and 53% exported their product overseas. During the pandemic, the Relight the City Business Support programme provided access to a free package of **support**, business and digital reviews and access to Relight grants of up to £5,000 to

implement the recommendations in the reviews. The Digital Review aimed to assist the company in **strengthening their online presence** including the use of their website to market the company, the use of **social media** and their technical capability. The importance of digital connectivity is recognised in office with I9 applying for wired score status, an industry recognised rating of the quality of a buildings digital connectivity. The council, Black Country Chamber of Commerce and University of Wolverhampton are working together to develop an Enterprise Hub



## WE ARE PROPOSING

1. Influence national, regional and local **digital business support** activity to ensure our vital local businesses get the right digital support for them.
2. Support businesses and entrepreneurs to integrate **e-commerce** into day-to-day business activity and channel shift to online trading and Data & Cyber Security.
3. Develop the **digital skills** of workforces including the signing the FutureDotNow pledge motivating people and businesses to boost their digital skills to thrive in a digital UK.
4. Support **digital innovation in key sectors and their supply chain** including aerospace, advanced manufacturing etc.
5. Grow the **tech sector** through ensuring key ingredients in place to support the growth including workspace, support, access to finance and the environment, retaining talent.

WE ARE PROPOSING

Digital business support

e-Commerce

Digital Skills

Digital Innovation for supply chain

Grow the tech sector



## Digital Economy (Learning, Skills and Jobs)

### VISION

Develop, attract  
and retain digital  
skills

### BACKGROUND

Digital skills are crucial for employment with Covid-19 forced digitisation in the workplace. However nationally only 52% of workforce have the necessary digital skills for work, 22% do not have life skills and 16% lack foundation skills allowing them to participate in a digital world. Lloyds Digital Index 2021 confirmed in the last 12 months that although things have improved with less people offline and more with essential digital skills, 11 million people are still lacking basic digital skills and 36% still lack essential digital skills for the workplace.

There are some key opportunities for residents in digital. Tech Nation reports the number of advertised tech jobs in 2021 is 42% higher than pre-pandemic levels, Tech vacancies make up a higher proportion of all vacancies in the UK post-pandemic and the average tech salary is up to 50% higher than the average and is increasing whilst the average salary for all jobs in the UK has decreased in 2021. In addition, there are also significant job opportunities being generated through the rollout of futureproofed digital infrastructure. However, in both these areas, local businesses continue to report difficulty recruiting due to skills gaps.



## PROGRESS

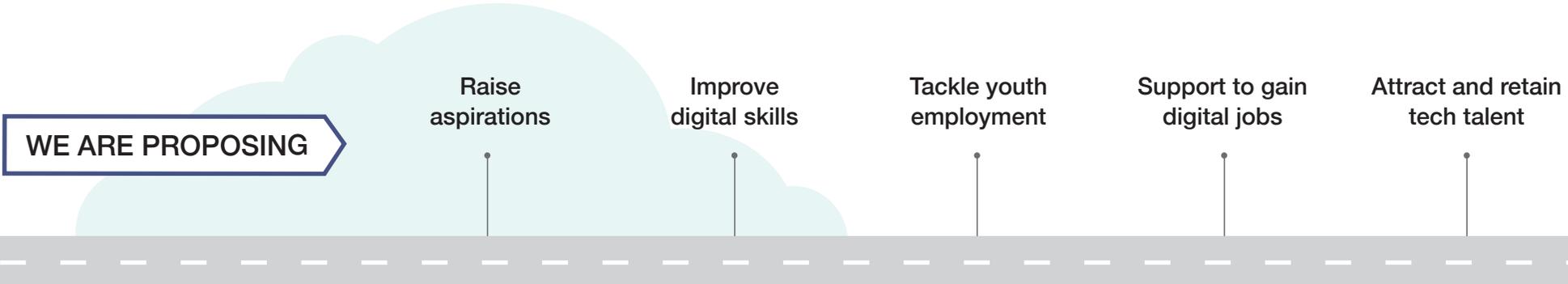
The City of Wolverhampton College and University of Wolverhampton amongst other skills partners have strong digital offers. The City of Wolverhampton College was winner of Creative Training provider in 2019 and the University of Wolverhampton offer a range of digital courses including specialisms in cyber security, software games development, emerging interactive and smart technologies including their new multi million pound Screen School developing skills in screen based media including Animation and Games Design. The Council developed the **Digital Wolves website** bringing together digital skills provision in one place. In addition, **Wolves Digital Infrastructure Academy** is being developed

in partnership with the City of Wolverhampton College, University of Wolverhampton and Council to support Wolverhampton residents to get jobs in this growing sector. West Midlands Combined Authority have funded a number of **Digital Bootcamps** linked to real jobs in the tech sector. The Council are developing a **Digital Skills Framework** developing foundation skills (basic digital skills everyone should have, regardless of role), essential digital skills (skills required by anyone using IT and digital on a daily basis) and specialist skills (advanced skills required by people in specific role).



## WE ARE PROPOSING

1. Enhance Digital Wolves website and develop communication campaign to raise awareness of digital skills, learning and jobs opportunities.
2. Raise awareness and engage with children and young people to **raise aspirations** and engage in digital.
3. **Improve digital skills** necessary to secure employment and in the workplace to meet in needs of the employers.
4. **Tackle youth unemployment** by supporting Wolverhampton young people into tech sectors through Digital Bootcamps.
5. **Develop skills and support access to digital jobs** in all sectors and digital sectors including the Digital Wolves Infrastructure Academy (DWIA) and Digital Bootcamps.
6. **Create the right environment** to attract and retain talent.



WE ARE PROPOSING

Raise  
aspirations

Improve  
digital skills

Tackle youth  
employment

Support to gain  
digital jobs

Attract and retain  
tech talent

## Consultation Questions

**Do you agree with our five digital themes?**



What should our priorities be for **digital infrastructure**?



What should our priorities be for **digital inclusion**?



What should our priorities be for **digital innovation**?



What should our priorities be for **engaging with businesses**?



What should our priorities be for **improving digital learning, skills and jobs**?

You can get this information in large print, braille, audio or in another language by calling 01902 551155

**wolverhampton.gov.uk** 01902 551155

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