

## Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment

Reference: ECIA422992127

Submitted: 18 May 2022 12:47 PM

### Executive summary

**Title of policy / decision:** Delivering Digital Connectivity for Essex

**Policy / decision type:** Cabinet Member Action (CMA)

**Overview of policy / decision:** Publish the Digital Connectivity Strategy and allocate revenue funding from the Everyoneâ€™s Essex Reserve to fund the operation of the Digital Essex team, incorporating Digital Connectivity and Digital Inclusion, for the three financial years from 2023/24 to 2025/26.

Digital Essex will utilise data relating to the causes of digital exclusion and identify the areas and cohorts where inclusion initiatives will have the biggest impact with the aim of ensuring that all members of our society have the access and skills needed to engage with our emerging digital society.

Digital Essex will launch a top-up voucher scheme aimed at providing digital connectivity solutions to the last 1% of Essex residents and businesses without superfast broadband to gigabit services using funds from previous project savings and gainshare.

**What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?:** Complete the rollout of Public Sector funded Infrastructure to connect Essex residents and businesses

Create a range of funded initiatives to support a faster rollout of fixed and mobile broadband Infrastructure.

Support and encourage the procurement of a Project gigabit project in collaboration with BDUK to ensure gigabit infrastructure is available to as many residents and businesses as possible.

Design and target digital inclusion initiatives that will provide digitally excluded residents and businesses with the Skills, Affordability and Motivation to make use of digital connectivity

Provide targeted digital support for Essex businesses to enable Future Growth & Investment as they emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Executive Director responsible for policy / decision:** Tom Walker (Economy, Investment and Public Health)

**Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision:** Lesley Wagland (Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning)

**Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?:** New policy / decision

**How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?:** ECC will continue to monitor the pace of digital connectivity infrastructure deployment. As BDUK Project Gigabit progress targets will be set for the availability of digital connectivity. The current targets are below, these will need to be reassessed as BDUK funding becomes available.

Superfast speeds available at all premises in Essex

Gigabit-capable services available at more than 85% of premises in Essex

4G services available at over 99% of the Essex geography

5G services available at all key employment locations and in identified priority areas

Within the Levelling Up areas, digital exclusion is recorded as a percentage of the geography, targeted campaigns and projects will be designed to have a measurable and appreciable positive impact on the percentage of exclusion. This will become a target for the programme.

**Will this policy / decision impact on:**

**Service users:** Yes

**Employees:** Yes

**Wider community or groups of people:** Yes

**What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?:** Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy, Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Economy?:** Good jobs, Infrastructure, Future growth and investment, Levelling up the economy

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health:** Promoting independence

**What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?:** All Essex

## Digital accessibility

**Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?:** Yes

**What steps you have taken to meet the digital accessibility:** The Essex County Council accessibility team reviewed the Superfast Essex website and produced an accessibility review and statement on 15/09/2020. This compared the accessibility of the website with the WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards, producing a pass / fail document on every aspect of the standards.

On those aspects that failed, we took specific actions with our best endeavours to pass the accessibility guidelines.

On content specific fails, actions include:

- Editing the contrast between text adjacent to images

- Replace all images of tables with tables themselves

- Adding alt-text to all appropriate images

- Implementing proper HTML structure and correct landmarks on all webpages (H1, H2 etc)

- Replace ambiguous link text (eg find out more) with link direction

On back end / technical fails, we raised the issues with the Technical Services team as we are unable to sort those issues directly.

**How have you tested accessibility?:** Superfast Essex had the accessibility team review the website in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 accessibility standards.

The accessibility team then produced a pass / fail document on every aspect of the standards for the Superfast Essex team to review and implement.

An accessibility statement was also produced.

**How will you monitor and maintain accessibility once it has gone live?:** Whenever we now add a new page to the website the HTML structure is reviewed.

All tables and images are also reviewed to be in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 guidelines.

We also run a monthly report to identify any broken links that may have appeared on the website.

## Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

### Age

**Nature of impact:** None

### Disability - learning disability

**Nature of impact:** None

### Disability - mental health issues

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Disability - physical impairment**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Disability - sensory impairment**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Sex**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Gender reassignment**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Marriage / civil partnership**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Pregnancy / maternity**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Race**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Religion / belief**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Sexual orientation**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:** While the proposed Digital Connectivity Strategy and Digital Essex team will enable better digital connectivity, and help overcome barriers to inclusion such as affordability, skills and motivation.

This work is not expected to have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. The proposals under the Digital Connectivity Strategy will be ubiquitous and aim to protect the wellbeing and prospects of residents across the whole of Essex.

**What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:** One of the Digital Connectivity Strategy's proposals is to tackle digital exclusion in priority cohorts and localities in Essex which have been identified by the Levelling Up programme. However, these groups have not been determined by the nine protected characteristics.

## **Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts**

### **Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Children on Free School Meals**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Working families**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

## **Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

## **Harlow**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Jaywick and Clacton**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

## **Harwich**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

## **Basildon (Town) housing estates**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Canvey Island**

**Nature of impact:** None

## **Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

## **Rural North of the Braintree District**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:** Digital inclusion and Digital connectivity initiatives are planned for the indicated Levelling up areas and cohorts, this is based around insight gained from research and Insight Team at ECC.

The purpose of the Strategy and Digital Essex team is to provide the capability and funding to have measurable positive impacts on the identified Levelling up groups.

The impact is currently indicated as Low, this is because the work is still in the nascent stages of design,

approval of the CMA will allow this to progress and it is envisaged that through the life of the program that there will be a medium or high positive impact.

**What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:** Digital inclusion and Digital connectivity is overseen and guided by dedicated Steering Boards with a broad range of stakeholder engagement. This broad oversight from public, private and the charity sector will ensure that any possible negative impacts are mitigated against.

## **Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups**

### **Refugees / asylum seekers**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **Homeless / rough sleepers**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **Offenders / ex-offenders**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **Carers**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **Looked after children**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **Veterans**

**Nature of impact:** None

### **People who are unemployed / economically inactive**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

### **People on low income**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

### **Working families**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

**Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:** Digital inclusion initiatives are planned for the indicated health and priority groups, similar to the Levelling up groups this is based around insight gained from research and Insight Team at ECC.

The purpose of the Strategy and Digital Essex team is to provide the capability and funding to have measurable positive impacts on the identified Levelling up groups.

The impact is currently indicated as Low, this is because the work is still in the nascent stages of design,

approval of the CMA will allow this to progress and it is envisaged that through the life of the program that there will be a medium or high positive impact.

**What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:** Digital inclusion is overseen and guided by a dedicated Steering Board with a broad range of stakeholder engagement. This broad oversight from public, private and the charity sector will ensure that any possible negative impacts are mitigated against.

## Equalities - Geographical Groups

### People living in areas of high deprivation

**Nature of impact:** None

### People living in rural or isolated areas

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Extent of impact:** Low

### People living in coastal areas

**Nature of impact:** None

### People living in urban or over-populated areas

**Nature of impact:** None

**Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:** Funding for one of the broadband rollout initiatives was provided by DEFRA, Essex bid and was awarded over Â£5million from the Rural Broadband Infrastructure Scheme. The scheme specifically supports businesses in rural areas which are not currently scheduled to receive broadband as part of commercial delivery plans or under the Government's Superfast Broadband Programme. In targeting businesses rural residents also benefit.

A voucher scheme will target areas left out of commercial deployment, this tends to align with rural or isolated areas but connectivity can be poor across all geographies in Essex and so whilst the other geographical groups are not specifically targeted they will be included.

The impact is currently indicated as Low, much of the DEFRA funded work is underway and further benefit will be derived from the voucher scheme which is still in the nascent stages of design, approval of the CMA will allow this to progress and it is envisaged that through the life of the voucher scheme that there will be a medium or high positive impact.

Digital inclusion initiatives are planned across Essex but predominantly for Levelling up groups. The purpose of the Strategy and Digital Essex team is to provide the capability and funding to conduct further research into additional areas/groups that through a lack of affordability, skills or motivation as a result further parts so Essex may be included.

**What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:** Digital inclusion and Digital connectivity is overseen and guided by dedicated Steering Boards with a broad range of stakeholder engagement. This broad oversight from public, private and the charity sector will ensure that any possible negative impacts are mitigated against.

DEFRA are providing assurance about the premises that qualify as rural for investment.

## Families

**Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Families before, during and after couple separation**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown**

**Nature of impact:** None

**Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:** While the proposed Digital Connectivity Strategy and Digital Essex team will enable better digital connectivity, and help overcome barriers to inclusion such as affordability, skills and motivation.

This work is not expected to have a disproportionately adverse impact on Families as listed above. The proposals under the Digital Connectivity Strategy will be ubiquitous and aim to protect the wellbeing and prospects of residents across the whole of Essex.

**What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts:** One of the Digital Connectivity Strategy's proposals is to tackle digital exclusion in priority cohorts and localities in Essex which have been identified by the Levelling Up programme. However, these groups have not been determined by the Families as listed above.

## Climate

**Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to the built environment / energy?:** No

**Does your decision / policy involve designing service provision and procurement to minimise freight and staff travel and enable use of active and public transport options?:** No

**Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to waste?:** No

## Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

**Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?:** No

## Details of person completing the form

**I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance:** I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

**Date ECIA completed:** 18/05/2022

**Name of person completing the ECIA:** Douglas Parrant

**Email address of person completing the ECIA:** Douglas.Parrant@essex.gov.uk

**Your function:** Economy, Investment and Public Health

**Your service area:** Sustainable Growth

**Your team:** Digital Essex

**Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?:** No

**Email address of Head of Service:** steve.evison@essex.gov.uk