



Subject:	Update on Smart Belfast
Date:	23rd April, 2021
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The development of a world class 'Smart District' is about harnessing place-based digital innovation to support the city centre's recovery and the transformation of the wider city. In particular, the importance of advanced wireless connectivity has been identified to support Belfast's economic ambition and will form the backbone of the 'Belfast Smart District'.
1.2	The Council has been working with city partners and industry experts to consider how best to prepare a significant proposal to the Belfast Region City Deal's Infrastructure Enabling Fund that will stimulate investment and the rapid deployment of advanced wireless connectivity.

1.3	Following positive responses from key partners, it is proposed that the Council now proceeds to a detailed feasibility study to determine the optimal model for investment.
1.4	<p>The paper also provides short updates on two Smart Belfast initiatives:</p> <p>A request by the Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment (NITRE) for Belfast City Council to participate in a proposed Northern Ireland pilot project to establish a citizen's panel which will consider issues associated with unlocking health data for innovation; and</p> <p>Belfast's success in being selected by the Intelligent Communities Forum as one of 21 'Smart Communities of 2021'.</p>
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. note the work to date on advanced wireless infrastructure and its importance to the Belfast's economic and transformation/recovery ambitions; 2. approve a feasibility study to determine the optimal model for investment in support of advanced wireless connectivity; 3. approve Belfast City Council's role, working with government partners, in the design of a proposed NI citizen's panel to consider issues associated with unlocking health data for innovation; and 4. note Belfast's award of 'Smart 21 Communities' by the Intelligent Communities Forum and its progress to the final of 'Intelligent Community of the Year'.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Smart Belfast programme was established by Belfast City Council to foster collaborative innovation between the public sector, universities, business and the wider community. Over the past three years it has worked with partners to exploit the opportunities of emerging digital technologies such as AI and 5G for positive economic and societal impact. The approach has proven successful and has subsequently informed the content of the Digital pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal and its proposals for a world class Smart District and testbeds programme and Infrastructure Enabling Fund.</p>
3.2	<p>The underlying premise for the Smart District is that the powerful combination of digital technologies, collaborative innovation and place-based development can have a transformative impact on a city's wider economy and future services. A Smart District will not only attract businesses and investment, it can also act as a testbed for innovative solutions to major urban challenges such as mobility, energy, and sustainable neighbourhoods. A well-</p>

curated district provides a rich testing ground from planners, policymakers, researchers and innovators. Once proven, successful solutions can then be adopted at scale across a city.

3.3 The proposals for the 'Belfast Smart District' are currently in development and further details will be presented to Members in the coming months.

3.4 Advanced wireless networks (such as 5G) are a foundational technology for our smart district ambition. More broadly, such networks are expected the backbone for urban economies and modern city services. The ideal for any city seeking to stake a claim to digital innovation is to provide an environment in which these wireless technologies are not only deployed quickly – but are done in a fashion that is open and which supports rapid innovation in services.

3.5 In June 2020, independent industry expert consultants were commissioned to work with the Council to determine its role in supporting advanced wireless investment. In outline, the study recommended that there is a unique opportunity for city partners to bring physical assets together and to potentially utilise City Deal investment via the Infrastructure Enabling Fund to accelerate the deployment of advanced wireless connectivity. This would offer mobile operators, large or small, easier access to urban assets, and connectivity equipment to greatly reduce barriers to rapid deployment.

3.6 The approach would seek to attract co-investment from the private sector. And more broadly support a programme to reduce digital exclusion and grow the conditions for SME innovation, university research, and the deployment of the latest urban services.

3.7 A feasibility study and industry engagement programme is now required to build upon the recommendations to validate the finding and to develop a shared value proposition that would form the basis of a substantial business case to the BRCD Infrastructure Enabling Fund.

3.8 Members are asked to approve the commissioning of the feasibility study by suppliers with the relevant technical expertise.

Supporting the innovative use of health data in Northern Ireland

3.9 Health and Social Care Services were recently tasked by the NI Department for Health to prepare a response for the Health Minister regarding the innovative use of health data. The current legislation in Northern Ireland is quite restrictive in relation to the 'secondary use' of health data. The Department is considering changes to the legislation to unlock the more

	<p>innovative use of data by researchers, clinicians and industry. There are opportunities to enhance diagnostics, therapeutic, medical research and SME growth. Data challenges in relation to the local response to the Covid crisis have helped accelerate this agenda.</p>
3.10	<p>As part of this work, the Northern Ireland Trusted Research Environment (NITRE) has approached the Council's City Innovation Office to help gather evidence on the way forward. NITRE is working with health partners on a limited Northern Ireland pilot project which will commence in Spring 2021. The project will establish (in the first instance) a Belfast-focused Public Data Panel. The panel would bring together members of the public to consider the ethical, legal, technical, and economic issues and opportunities surrounding the innovative use of health data. Many of the issues associated with the project are similar to those associated with proposals for a Smart District. The panel will help co-design approaches and want to draw upon the work of the BCC team in relation to the ethical and trusted use of data in the city.</p>
3.11	<p>The proposal is still in draft stage, and NITRE are seeking the Council's in principle agreement to contribute to the project. Members are asked to approve the Council's involvement. There is no financial request from the Council.</p>
	<p>Intelligent Communities Forum: Smart21 Communities award 2021</p>
3.12	<p>Belfast has been selected by the Intelligent Communities Forum¹ (ICF) as one of 21 cities worldwide to receive the 'Smart 21 Communities' award (alongside cities such as Adelaide, Philadelphia and Moscow). ICF is a global network of cities and regions with a mission to help communities in the digital age find a new path to economic development and community growth.</p>
3.13	<p>Following this announcement, ICF will work with us to gather more information about our city. Seven cities will be selected to advance to the 'Top 7 Intelligent Communities' in June with one city being named the 'Intelligent Community of the Year' later in October.</p>
	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p>
3.14	<p>The estimated cost for a full wireless feasibility study and market engagement exercise is approximately £180,000. This has been identified within the Council's City Deal development budget for 2020/2021.</p>

¹ https://www.intelligentcommunity.org/icf_names_the_smart21_communities_of_2021

	The Council is being asked to contribute staff team time to the NITRE Data project, particularly from the City Innovation Team's Data Specialist.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.15	None.
4.0	Documents Attached
	None.