

## **DIGITAL WATFORD BOARD**

**20 September 2017**

Present: Councillor M Watkin (Chair)  
Councillor D Barks (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors K Collett and Ahsan Khan (for minute number 5 onwards)

Also present: Taryn Pearson-Rose, Hertfordshire County Council  
Lee Walsingham, Watford & West Herts Chamber of Commerce  
Chris Pearson, West Herts College  
Mark Stanley, Digital Catapult

Officers: Head of Service Transformation  
Watford 2020 Programme Manager  
Democratic Services Manager

### **1 Welcome and introductions - apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the point of the Digital Watford Board was to be a launch pad for ideas. It was creating an environment where people could use the latest technology. The board was there to enable, support and stimulate.

Apologies were received from Maria Manion (Watford BID), Paul Quinn (Watford UTC) and Chris Pearson replaced Gill Worgan (West Herts College). Councillor Martins was absent.

### **2 Disclosure of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes for 24 July 2017 were agreed.

## **Digital Watford Board responsibilities and terms of reference**

The Board received a report of the Head of Service Transformation regarding the terms of reference which were reviewed and agreed at Cabinet on 11 September 2017.

The Head of Service Transformation explained that the Digital Watford objectives were around delivering vision, implementing town wide technologies and supporting their use. The membership of the new Board was a cross section of organisations that had an interest in this area and could bring people together.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Digital Watford Board agrees the new terms of reference

## **Watford's digital infrastructure**

A presentation was received by the Head of Service Transformation.

Digital infrastructure already in Watford:

- Traditional infrastructure
  - i. Broadband – all of Watford should have access to superfast broadband by 2019.
  - ii. Mobile phone networks – Watford had good 3G and 4G coverage with 5G expected in the UK in late 2020 and Watford at some point thereafter.
- New infrastructure:
  - i. Town Centre Wi-Fi – free public access and looking at the feasibility of extending to Cassiobury Park, St Albans Road and Whippendell Road
  - ii. High speed roof top broad band for businesses which would be around 25% of the cost from a traditional provider. Discussions were underway with a provider for Watford.
  - iii. LoRaWAN – four gateways were live in Watford to provide coverage across the Borough. The Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that University College London (UCL) wanted to come and heat map LoRaWAN coverage.

LoRAWaN was currently a trial network but could be business as usual in the future. It was free to use currently but there would be a small cost per device to cover overheads.

The Board discussed some potential uses for the LoRaWAN technology. A key issue was seen to be communication so that people in the business community could come up with ideas or engage with students. HCC had been considering the 'art of the possible' and were aware that Watford had the infrastructure for a pilot which could then be rolled out to similar areas e.g., St Albans.

## **6 Update on current Digital Watford initiatives**

The Head of Service Transformation updated the Board on current projects.

The Electric Blue bay monitoring had been installed that day. The council were working with Electric Blue (electric vehicle charging company). The trial objective was to assess whether the sensor could alert customers where there was an available charge point and also use the data for parking enforcement. It would prove whether it could be done and how it could add value. This could then be used for other parking situations. There would be updates to future boards on how this was progressing. The second project was working with West Herts College students using the Internet of Things as part of their Cyber Security course which started in September. It was hoped that the students may be able to do a presentation to the Digital Watford Board in the future.

Following questions the Head of Service Transformation confirmed that the council was trying to move away from checking physical things as part of internal transformation. The benefits from staff only carrying out tasks when actually required would be substantial. The opportunities were under investigation in each service across the council.

## **7 Digital Catapult - Things Connected Innovation Programme**

The Board received a presentation from Mark Stanley, Digital Catapult.

Mr Stanley's presentation covered:

- Digital Catapult was based in London and focused its emphasis on growing the UK economy where technology was not being exploited to its full extent.
- The company was working with LPWAN (low powered wide area network) which would give wider coverage and batteries could last for years compared to Wi-Fi. LoRaWAN is a LPWAN technology. The amount of data transmitted was tiny but could be sent from thousands of devices. The devices were easy to deploy. For example parking sensors could be installed in a car park and would last for as long as the surface of the road.
- UK industry was falling behind in innovation in the two main LPWAN technologies as there was no national network. The telecoms companies

had invested heavily in 3G and 4G technology and needed to make that investment back.

- Examples of use of the technology included:
  - i. Air quality sensors for outside schools or to measure the impact on the environment of construction
  - ii. Monitoring energy to control costs
  - iii. Flood management e.g., sensors on bridges in Oxford
  - iv. Safety and security
  - v. Monitoring traffic lights to see whether the bulbs needed changing
- Digital Catapult had a LoRaWAN network deployed across North London with approximately 50 gateways. They run innovation programmes using the network. Mr Stanley explained that a device which worked on LoRaWAN in Kings Cross would also work in Watford therefore as an example could be used by logistics companies to track deliveries.
- Community networks were currently free but there were commercial operators who would charge a fee for guaranteed service levels.
- Their next innovation round would cover social housing and independent living. This could include ideas such as monitoring whether lifts were working, smoke alarms that also reported room temperature etc. It would be a six week programme helping start-ups and SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprise) to get closer to working with local authorities and housing providers.

The Board commented that as the Watford Community Housing Trust (WCHT) was the largest housing provider in the Borough they should be invited to future Digital Watford Board meetings. It was also commented that WCHT would likely also be housing those most vulnerable to digital exclusion.

Action – Head of Service Transformation to invite WCHT to a future Digital Watford Board meeting

## 8

### **Delivering the objectives of the Digital Watford Board**

There was discussion around how to make the ideas for projects into a reality by raising awareness of infrastructure and its capabilities.

Future suggestions:

- Watford Chamber of Commerce could help to get the message out.
- Board needed to focus on communication to find out who could use the technology and to consider how to support them.
- Board to think ahead about what needs there may be in five years' time e.g., electric cars, autonomous cars etc.

- Suggested uses around sensors on corners of congested streets to tell parking enforcement when someone was parked there illegally.
- Other parking suggestions – to know where there was a parking space available would help businesses, environment, users fuel, congestion etc.

Action - Head of Service Transformation to draw up a communications plan including a channel for Board members' communication between meetings.

Action – for all Board Members to consider their own organisations and how they would want to use the technology.

Each organisation would lead on their individual projects but engage with the Digital Watford Board and update on progress.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm  
and finished at 8.10 pm