

DIGITAL WATFORD BOARD

15 January 2018

Present: Councillor M Watkin (Chair)
Councillor D Barks (Vice-Chair)
Councillors K Collett and R Martins

Also present: Taryn Pearson-Rose, Hertfordshire County Council
Lee Walsingham, Watford & West Herts Chamber of
Commerce
Emma Doree, West Herts College
Maria Manion, Watford BID
Paul Quinn, UTC

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

9 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Chris Pearson (West Herts College), Paul Richmond and Barry Wilson (Watford Community Housing). Councillor Ahsan Khan was absent.

10 **Disclosure of interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

11 **Minutes**

The minutes for 20 September 2017 were submitted and signed.

12 **Update on actions**

The Board looked at the actions arising from the last meeting:

- Watford Community Housing had been invited to attend the Digital Watford Board (DWB) but was unable to be present at the meeting.
- The communications plan would be covered later in the agenda
- Board members considering their own use of technology would also be covered later in the agenda.

RESOLVED – that the actions from the last meeting were completed.

13 **Digital Watford Communications Plan**

A presentation was received from the Head of Service Transformation.

The overarching objective of the communications plan was to educate interested businesses and residents on the digital infrastructure available and encourage its use.

The communications plan would be used to bring people together and to find out whether people were using the LoRaWAN network. In order to implement a network in the long term there needed to be a business case. The council would support people to develop using the network for example by putting them in touch with Digital Catapult.

The Communications Plan would launch Digital Watford in February to raise awareness with businesses and the community. This would be delivered through the DWB members' communications channels as well as social media, web pages, Watford Observer, printed media and local radio.

From March – October there would be a focus on features of individual case studies where technology was being used and was making a difference.

In November there would be a review of the success of the Communications Plan.

The DWB discussed the launch:

- Suggested to integrate into the Digital Cluster meetings
- Getting the public to be excited about Watford being digital through a stand in intu or BID areas.

The Head of Service Transformation would consider the suggestions raised by the Board. He also commented on the future of DWB meetings to make them less formal by having a seminar approach with a formal review twice a year.

The DWB considered that there would be two strands to communication: one strand to those who would be excited by the technology and its possibilities including businesses; a second strand with tangible examples for residents of where the technology had been used.

Publicity suggestions from DWB:

- Using letters from Revenues and Benefits or Housing to promote how to report missed bin collections online
- Banners at Watford Junction
- Using dot mailer or mail chimp to promote events and then monitor click rates
- Create a general awareness of what was happening and come back to those who may not have been interested in the first wave of publicity
- Being clear that Digital Watford meant more than just Wi-Fi
- Not just focus on LoRaWAN but promote Watford as somewhere capable of helping people and developing business in a digital way.

RESOLVED: The Board agreed the Communications Plan

14 **Digital Watford initiatives**

The members of DWB updated the Board on current projects.

- Electric charging bay monitoring: the company provided electric charge points. The 2020 Programme Manager explained that the company had contacted the council to trial a LoRaWAN enabled sensor. When the sensor was first installed it was working, however, it was now not working. This was a trial which had demonstrated that although devices could be purchased they did not always have the support if they went wrong. The company had done some testing and had a new device to try which would come with some support. The device would be installed in Timberlake car park.

Following questions from the Board the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that currently the data could be viewed through Digital Catapult but it was very raw data. There were separate companies which provided data visualisation platforms.

- Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) digital projects: Ms Pearson-Rose explained that HCC was looking at a range of digital projects with a key focus on social care. Service users wanted to stay in their homes and there were pilots around the country and abroad using sensors. A number of companies had been to pitch products to HCC but had not met all the requirements as yet. HCC was looking at how to trial technology in Watford using the LoRaWAN system with the aim to see whether it would be possible to deploy devices into people's homes. HCC was going to trial some sensors in the Watford Library and look at what data would be received. A proof of concept was needed which could then be scaled up.

Following questions regarding timescales, Ms Pearson-Rose explained that the sensors would be installed in the library soon. However, the county was complex geographically and what worked in an urban setting may not necessarily work in a rural location. They also needed to consider the social workers receiving the data and what needs or conditions to target. The project was committed to trialling a network with sensors.

- Watford UTC: Mr Quinn introduced Watford UTC and explained that it could bring expertise and a willingness to be involved; the students were keen people on a journey to expertise. There was robotics kit available to use in lessons and work on projects. The UTC used graphical interface for robot coding (easy to use), however, sitting behind that was real code which could be used. Local primary schools came in to the UTC to work on event management and in the digital space looking at robots and coding. Students worked on a range of different projects and were looking to extend their skill set across the board.

Mr Quinn responded to questions from the DWB that there was potential for partners to tap into a workforce, particularly if the students could undertake a specific project.

Ms Doree described the work of West Herts College students in helping a business set up a social media channel for their events and sales and advising on security settings and how to communicate on social media. The DWB discussed setting challenges for students as the college had recently done this regarding working with less paper and had made a reduction of over 100,000 sheets. Ms Pearson-Rose referred to Liverpool Innovate which had set problems regarding adult social care and had asked people to come up with solutions.

- Watford Chamber of Commerce: Mr Walsingham discussed communications and using the Watford Chamber channels to raise awareness of the project. They were looking to identify people working in the digital sector and making links to college and educational establishments. They were keen to link with the Digital Cluster, which included digital marketing groups, and have a regular presence. Mr Walsingham explained that within the county there were a number of financial grants linked with energy saving and power saving. There should be some synergy if applications could attract a grant to help develop ideas.
- Watford Community Housing: The Watford 2020 Programme Manager advised that Watford Community Housing was considering using sensors for fire and smoke detection. It was working with Digital Catapult and was also looking at what the London Borough of Camden was doing in this area.

- Watford BID: Ms Manion explained that there was a business to business event coming up which would be an opportunity to promote Digital Watford. Security was a big issue for businesses. The BID was also looking at how to link the night time and early evening economy.
- Taxis and parking – the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that there was an innovation programme with Digital Catapult to look at how to solve problems. There would be a benefit to a local authority to be able to identify when specific vehicles were parked in specific bays. For example, to know when a Watford Borough Council licensed taxi was in a rank, or let parking enforcement know when a non-licensed taxi was parked, or advise customers where there was a taxi available. Secondly, with regards to parking enforcement for permits in CPZ's, it could be possible to target enforcement to a vehicle without a permit.
- Footfall counters: the Head of Service Transformation explained that there were two methods to count footfall – mobile phones and cameras. Whilst both worked well and provided data they were expensive and inflexible in terms of deployment. Using the Digital Catapult innovation programme it would be possible to develop technology which would produce the same data sets but for less cost and more flexible deployment. There could also be a wider use which would have a financial benefit if it could deliver the same level and quality of data.
- Smart litter bins: the Watford 2020 Programme Manager explained that with regards to public litter bins in the high street and parks the objective was for the bins to tell the council when they were almost full. Devices had been rolled out in Milan and the council was looking to scope these and find out whether they would fit in the current bins. The device would measure the level of waste. Ms Pearson-Rose commented that smart bins were already in use in Brighton and had radically reduced costs.

RESOLVED: The Board noted the updates

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 8.00 pm