

## Notes from LEP Discussion group – June 15<sup>th</sup> 2022

### Questions:

- What should our priorities be – businesses/residential areas
- What are the needs – evidence and examples
- How do we break down silo working to ensure ‘digital’ is a thread through all work streams

### Feedback from groups

- A general consensus that digital touches ‘everyone’ so there should be focus on residents and businesses.
- Digital connectivity should be embedded in our thinking as an ‘essential service’.
- Needs assessment and gap analysis is key to understanding the digital landscape (ensuring an evidence-based strategy).
- Important to understand the strategies of the technology providers and align our priorities.
- Consider the post Covid shift towards more home working – digital access important for business premises and residential.
- Good coverage in rural areas attracts and retains talent – eg. “Come to Cheshire and Warrington you will have an attractive work/life balance – ability to work from home.”
- Better connectivity is key to some of the big themes and challenges such as .....rural isolation, digital inclusivity/exclusion, health and well-being.
- Digital natives are ready for work but we need to ensure older people are not excluded from the shift towards a digital world.
- Consider training and support on digital safeguarding.
- Bigger corporates are better placed to take advantage of digital innovation, they tend to be well connected. SMEs may need more guidance and support to take advantage of technology and available connectivity.
- SMEs do not have the capital funding often required to innovate.
- Peer to peer networking with a digital focus would benefit business (best practice within business settings).
- Community mentoring to help ensure and support digital inclusion.

- Don't just consider the big technology innovations – smaller incremental improvements in community and business are valuable and should be encouraged.
- Look at the forward challenges – how can we apply technology in those settings (eg. Foodbanks/stock control).
- Break down silo working with more collaboration within the LEP committees – but also with different regions and nationally.
- Ensure close working over innovation / transport connectivity and logistics.
- Social care – opportunities to underpin healthcare innovation (telemedicine, virtual appointments).
- Productivity gains for SMEs – example a successful pub/restaurant where front of house also do the social media engagement
- We need a skills focus – look at usage and behaviours.
- Look at a possible pilot/trial (similar to Cadent) to demonstrate new opportunities such as Starlink and OneWeb.
- Connect to the big projects – eg HS2, Hynet etc.