

Introduction

The Digital Birmingham team has delivered against many of its key objectives for 2010/11, building on these to move relevant agendas forward and start to develop a challenging work programme for 2011/12 with the aim of ensuring that digital opportunities are intrinsically linked to the City's ambitions.

From the 1st of February, the Digital Birmingham team transferred to the Development Directorate of the City Council and has a planned move to Lancaster Circus end of March. This repositioning provides greater alignment to the City's economic and sustainability agendas and enables the team to play a key role in integrating the opportunities and benefits of digital technologies into the City's strategies and policies.

Below is a summary of some of key achievements and ongoing activities with a look forward to Digital Birmingham's priorities 2011/12.

Key achievements and activities 2010/11

1. Succeed Economically

- The council through the Digital Birmingham team continues to move forward the Digital District agenda as a driver of economic growth and inward investment. The [Digital District project](#) focuses on improving Birmingham's digital infrastructure, in particular increasing the provision of ultra fast broadband connectivity for Birmingham in partnership with industry. A successful [Industry Sounding Event](#) involving over 40 organisations identified interested parties from all levels of the commercial supply chain keen to move forward this agenda. The business case for the Digital Districts is now being developed with consultants Mott McDonald.
- An initial pilot to develop a 4G city wide wifi network with Birmingham Science Park and Amey has started. Its aim is to use street base assets such as buildings & lamp posts to explore the robust reliability and opportunities of this network.
- Digital Birmingham's focus on growing an economically confident region making best, most effective use of digital technologies has seen it working on projects such as [Web 2.0 - Stimulate Demand](#) and events like Hello Business 2010. These have helped address the shortfall in businesses use and take-up of technologies in the region as well as enable greater collaboration between sectors in and outside of the region showcasing the use of tools such as social media; new applications and routes to online markets to increase their bottom line. Over 600 businesses have been reached during 2010.
- Digital Birmingham became an elected member of the steering committee for the [Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum](#) (KSF) which enables us to influence European policy.

2. Sustainability and Climate Change

- [Smart Metering Project](#), now in its final phase, has a testbed of 50 Birmingham households that is supporting Family Housing Association in creating eco villages through the tracking of their own electricity usage (10 of which are now monitoring gas usage). Evidence has shown that in raising awareness of usage, on average families were able to reduce their energy usage (& their bill) by 8% with 81% of users having a better understanding of their energy usage which will help behavioural change in the future. It has attracted R & D interest and approximately £100K in European funds and is seen as a key component of the Carbon Reduction Commitment.
- The City has signed up to the European Green Digital Charter and together with Service Birmingham, Digital Birmingham has successfully completed the first attempt to map the carbon footprint of the Council's laptops & desktops (via the EC Energy Star rating database). The baseline will help to identify ways the City Council can reduce its energy consumption in the future.
- A web conferencing trial ([Webex](#)) currently underway will help raise awareness of how online meetings can help to reduce officer travel, costs and CO₂ and contribute to the Grey Fleet review. Findings due in June 2011 will help build the wider business case for the city.

3. Digital Participation and Engagement

- Funding of £30K has been awarded to Digital Birmingham from Nesta to create a Birmingham Civic Dashboard. Working with Customer First and digital media developer Mudlark, the dashboard will enable residents and the Council to monitor and analyse customer requests & concerns based on where people live. Comparing live data sets will help to identify new trends and issues which in turn will help to stimulate new solutions and new ways of working that will help transform the delivery of services.
- [Birmingham's Looking Local TV](#) microsite, established by Digital Birmingham as part of a national initiative (also available through pc, wii, online and mobile phone), provides an important channel to access information on council services for those that may not have broadband access at home. It has achieved substantial growth in usage (58% in last four months), and continues to be the UK's leading site attracting 195,000 hits per month. The recently launched [iphone app](#) allows residents not only to report their missed bins/potholes or graffiti but also to geo-tag a specific location. The Looking Local channel is unique in that 68% of users have no internet access and 51% state they are unemployed and looking for a job, these are traditionally hard to reach groups and who would otherwise be digitally excluded.
- Birmingham is one of only four cities in the UK participating in a Euro Petitions pilot, which gives residents the chance to influence and lobby the EU parliament. ePetitions are a really important means of giving citizens direct access to the European Institutions with some reports having led to significant policy changes.

4. Raising the Profile of Birmingham

- Considerable activity was focused on organising the very successful [Hello Digital week](#) of events in October which included global partner cities Edmonton and Seoul. The Digital week focused on how emerging digital technologies can support economic growth, sustainability and the green agenda within both the public and private sectors. It also included a popular and timely Breakfast Spending Review and analysis briefing, led by Deloitte. The events attracted high profile visitors from both across the UK and Europe raising the digital credentials of the city and a place for investment on an international scale.
- A visit by Neelie Kroes, the EU's Vice President and digital agenda commissioner during Hello Digital week resulted in a follow up visit to Brussels to meet with members of her policy team to explore opportunities for further collaboration.
- The NextGen 10 conference and SME event in November helped to raise the profile and reputation of the city as an important voice in understanding how next generation access could accelerate the region's economic recovery and work with SMEs to build the business case.
- Digital Birmingham was successful in their bid to name Birmingham as one of the world's [Smart 21 'Intelligent Communities'](#) by global thinktank ICF (Intelligent Communities Forum). Birmingham was one of only four European cities to make the list. Global recognition of the region will help to make the city attractive for businesses to locate and invest in.
- Marketing activity for 2010/11 has generated £103K media coverage for both Birmingham and the Digital agenda and through Digital Birmingham secured in excess of £230K sponsorship.

Looking Forward 2011/12

The economic challenges facing the city will require radical thinking and the creative use of technology will play an important role in delivering new and smarter ways of working. The three key themes of work for its programme will focus on *Employment & employability*, *working towards a clean & safe city* and [protecting vulnerable people](#). Workshops with key partners and stakeholders are helping to shape Digital Birmingham's priorities and maximise areas of value and opportunities aligned to external grant funding. Aligned to these priorities and as part of Digital Birmingham's continued role in profiling the city for inward investment, will be the delivery of high profile events and activities to support the growth of key business sectors.

- Continue to develop the investment in infrastructure through the Digital Districts programme and 4G network to support inward investment and economic growth.
- Continued involvement with Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum and progressing the Green Digital Charter implementation.
- Exploring solutions that support independent living and carers and use of social media and open data for citizen's engagement with the Big Society.
- Working with Housing and Registered Providers to improve connectivity for social tenants.
- The progression of EU bids and other UK funded grant funds, both as a partner and lead co-ordinator. The bids that are currently being progressed are; ICT PSP CIP - Digital Skills & Competencies for Carers, Digital Inclusion in Cities in Europe - European Commission Life Long Learning Programme (DICE) and a Nominet Trust Bid.