



## Digital Birmingham Quarterly Report (Q3)

October – December 2011

### Introduction

This has been a particularly busy three months progressing funding bid proposals, notably securing and leading on the EU [DISCOVER](#) three year project developing the digital skills of carers which kick starts in February 2012.

Progressing the digital infrastructure [Digital Districts](#) and Next Generation wireless connectivity and influencing national and European policy in this area remains a key priority in enabling Birmingham's Smart and Connected City vision. Our future plans are now focusing on supporting the City's ambitions in establishing itself as a smart global city through the provision of services and sharing of data that will facilitate the diversity of applications for smart city wide services from for example mobility and energy through to healthcare and learning.

The city celebrated a successful 'Digital Week' in November that brought together partners across the city to showcase digital innovations, technologies and applications and in doing so facilitating greater cross sector collaboration and awareness of achieving success in a digital economy. Below is a summary of key developments and activities that support the city Council priorities of Employment, Economy, Education & Skills; Clean Green & Safe City and Protecting Vulnerable People.

### 1. Employment, Economy, Education & Skills

- The [Digital Districts](#) Programme, which aims to deliver ultrafast broadband connectivity, has been discussed and well received by officials in DCMS and DCLG who are supportive of the process in ensuring economic growth for the city and region. The State Aid notification has been progressed with EU commission and BIS to look at routes to unlock funding. A very successful regional visit by DG Regio and INFSO to member states, which included a London meeting hosted by Robert Madelin, Director General of the DG for Information Society and Media with chief executives and senior representatives from the core cities, Birmingham, Bristol and Manchester.
- Following Cabinet's approval, a full business case for the creation of a citywide, ubiquitous high speed wireless network is being developed. Market sounding has shown that there is significant interest and a formal OJEU procurement is now underway. The procurement, which could see the successful bidder use city assets such as tower-blocks and lampposts, will be a phased rollout and, whilst having a central focus on the availability of high speed services, also places a strong emphasis on the need for creativity in tackling digital & social exclusion. Discussions will take place with providers over the coming months. A [4G workshop](#) in November provided the opportunity to explore how ubiquitous coverage across the city could stimulate new and better ways of working.
- Through funding from Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP), Digital Birmingham is exploring the benefits of a shared Public Services Network (PSN) across the region to reduce costs and improve network performance. The business case & findings being conducted by **Spirit Public Sector Consultants** (responsible for setting up a successful PSN in Wales) will be shared with Chief Executives of all the Local Authorities involved. A successful workshop gave the Cabinet the opportunity to visit Birmingham and explain their rationale for PSN.

### 2. Sustainability and Climate Change

- Birmingham is one of 20 cities from across the globe participating in the [Living Labs Global Award 2012](#). Digital Birmingham has set the [challenge](#) for international technology and service solution providers to come up with innovative solutions using emerging technologies to look at how the city can generate energy capturing the many waste food streams that exist across the city (such as from markets, hotels, schools, restaurants, canteen and domestic households) and therefore reduce the amount sent to landfill. Living Labs Global Award scheme is a real opportunity to fully utilise technologies to efficiently and effectively process this waste, resulting in a sustainable energy source for the benefit of Birmingham businesses and residents.
- Digital Birmingham has led the development of an Open Data policy and strategic action plan, which will set the framework for decisions on publishing data online held by Birmingham City Council. We led a city wide response to the Government's Making Open Data Real Consultation and following a 'Making Open Data a Reality' workshop have established a cross sector working group of public sector partners that include health, fire and police to look at opportunities to share knowledge and learning in use of datasets to enhance service delivery and provision.

### 3. Digital Participation and Engagement – Protecting the Vulnerable

- The [Nesta](#) funded Birmingham Civic Dashboard co-developed by Digital Birmingham and digital production company [Mudlark](#) went live in October and is the first UK project combining public data and civil engagement. Interest has been received by other authorities as well as attracting comments direct to the site. Usage will be monitored for future development [www.cividdashboard.org.uk](http://www.cividdashboard.org.uk).
- The [Birmingham Looking Local](#) TV microsite, has seen a huge growth this quarter, with most coming into the Jobcentre Plus pages (an increase of 80% since March), which shows the site is providing valuable support for job seekers. In this quarter the focus shifted onto the increasingly popular Looking Local 'Report It' app. The app is attracting the more digital savvy Smart Phone users, enabling citizens to quickly and easily take photos of, for example pot holes, faulty street lights and graffiti, geo tag the location and inform the City Council whilst out and about. Approximately 25 to 30 reports are now received per month via the Council's Report It app and the forecast growth in the smart-phone market indicates this preferred channel will grow.
- Digital Birmingham hosted the [2<sup>nd</sup> National Digital Inclusion Housing Forum](#), which brought together hardware, software and connectivity suppliers with social housing providers to explore how services can be better tailored through the use of technology applications, devices and provision of affordable connectivity packages.

### 4. Profiling Birmingham

- Through a collaboration of partners, the city successfully hosted a [Digital Week](#) during Entrepreneurship Week in November. Main content areas covered business collaboration in a digital economy aimed at the business professional sector; the Future of Gaming focused on the digital, gaming and creative sector; #2Digital Days targeting inward investors and Hello Culture attracting the arts and creative industries. The Chartered Institute of Marketing and Manufacturing Advisory Service also supported the week by hosting their own events in Birmingham with a digital theme. The packed week of events attracted over 500 people showcasing the role and applications of digital technologies essential to achieving economic and business success.
- Digital Birmingham has showcased and presented its work at a number of events and conferences that include the Intellect and Broadband stakeholder group; NHS West Midlands Innovation Expo and Wired conference.

### 5. Funding Opportunities

A number of funding opportunities have been secured or are currently in development:

- Digital Birmingham has secured £2M funding from European projects that include [DISCOVER](#), which aims to develop the digital skills of both informal and formal carers and the Smart Spaces Programme, which will look at how energy savings can be made in real time from public buildings such as the Council House and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery as well as hints and tips on energy saving. Start date is planned for February 2012.
- Digital Birmingham has linked with city council teams and voluntary sector to put in a proposal for the [Department of Health Warm Homes Healthy People Fund 2011/12](#).

### 6. Looking forward January – March 2012

- Resolve state aid issues as part of the Digital Districts programme through continued close working with EU Commission and UK Government and progressing work on the procurement process for a 4G network across the City.
- Continue to explore with neighbouring LEPs the opportunities of establishing public sector networks to drive efficiencies in delivering public services, which will see the completion and release of the Public Services Network (PSN) audit and outline business case.
- Submit bid under the Super Connected Cities fund as announced in the Government's Autumn Statement.
- Progress the Living Labs Global award scheme in developing solutions to manage waste effectively.
- Launch event and planning for DISCOVER project with partners and stakeholders.
- Engage wider stakeholder community in debate around Birmingham's Smart City vision with first forum planned for 26<sup>th</sup> January at Fazeley Studios – ['Birmingham: the ticket to a smart connected city'](#).
- Progress digital inclusion work with housing and discussion with telecommunication providers around range of connectivity models and evaluate options.
- Explore an innovation model approach that will facilitate collaboration between SMEs, Higher Education Institutions across the Local Enterprise Partnership and Local Government that will stimulate innovation to develop local solutions to regional challenges.
- Progress the [TSB Technology Innovation Centre](#) proposal with [Birmingham Science City](#).