

Committee(s): Digital Services	Dated: 04-05-2022
Subject: Digital Skills Strategy	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3, 4, 5, 8, 9
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

This report presents the progress achieved through the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23 and outlines a transition pathway over the course of 2022-23 to ensure that the strategy outcomes become embedded into the relevant City of London Corporation skills, culture and business strategies as these are renewed and into City of London Corporation departmental business as usual activity.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report and appendices.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London Corporation developed and implemented the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23. Its aims over the five-year period, working in partnership with others, were to prioritise digital competitiveness, digital creativity and digital citizenship. The three interconnected strands translate into the following outcomes:
 - a. The City and the UK has the skills, talent and digital expertise it needs to drive the digital economy and productivity
 - b. Residents, workers and learners have the digital and fusion skills they need to thrive in all aspects of their lives.
2. The strategy did not apply to the employees of the Corporation and this is a separate strand of activity to better scope need in this area.

Current Position

3. We create an annual action plan to ensure the Digital Skills vision is converted into action through long-term, methodical interventions that deliver outcomes. The strategy is in its fourth year of implementation and this report provides a progress update on various actions taken by departments over that fourth year to implement its aims. A number of actions were successfully delivered or embedded in the earlier years of the strategy, but since 2020 the Covid-19 pandemic, and to some extent the City Corporation's transition to a new Operating Model which is still in progress, has impacted on the delivery of the planned activities in support of the strategy and some actions were paused or delivered virtually during the period. Some of the key performance indicators that were identified when the strategy was developed have been affected, so it is difficult to assess impact at the current time, though the pandemic provided a catalyst in driving service provision online.
4. **Priority 1 Competitiveness:** In this priority, our aims are to work with businesses, exploring the ways in which we can support digital innovation and enterprise; fill the digital skills gaps and shortages that businesses identify; and prevent and safeguard against cyber- attacks and cyber terrorism.
5. The Small Business Research & Enterprise Centre (SBREC - formerly City Business Library) events programme provides a range of digital courses and partners with external organisations to offer additional business support growth. SBREC partners with
 - a. [New Skills Academy](#) to offer discounted digital skills courses on Microsoft Office and business management and development;
 - b. [Google Digital Garage](#), offering free 121 digital support to SMEs;
 - c. [Amazon Small Business Accelerator](#), a free service offer that includes website building, selling online and marketing;
 - d. [NatWest Business Builder](#), an online tool for businesses to develop and grow.
6. SBREC promotes these offers through its SME 'Supporting SMEs and Start-ups' webpage and regular newsletters and social media. Its events programme includes a range of business support training, including topics such as 'Writing Digital. Blogging and words that sell', 'Accelerating business growth – systems and strategies for SMEs', 'Safer Internet Day: secure your business', 'How to approach scale-up and investments as a Tech start-up', 'Digital accounting. Masterclass for SMEs', 'WordPress: getting started', and many more. SBREC supports pre-start-ups, entrepreneurs and SMEs across the UK, including how to apply for the Covid Recovery and Omicron grants support to City businesses who do not have the technical skills to complete an online application of this nature.
7. CoL was a founding partner of FutureDotNow, which is bringing together leading companies, civil society groups and government to boost the UK's digital skills. CoL is providing event space and support for three FutureDotNow events during 2022 (delayed from 2020 by the pandemic) beginning with the FutureDotNow Spring Event in May for round table discussions with up to 150 business leaders.

8. We continue to promote London as both cyber secure and as a key market for product and service innovation in cyber. We also continue to support [Cyber Griffin](#), an initiative founded by City of London Police in 2017 to help individuals and businesses protect themselves against cyber crime.
9. **Priority 2 Creativity:** In this priority, our aims are to work with businesses, educators and civil society, to consider how we can raise educational aspiration and attainment in terms of digital skills; and prepare our learners, for the jobs of the future, in terms of the necessary digital skills, behaviours, attitudes and competencies.
10. Our libraries provide access for all to equipment and the internet and 1-1 support. The Barbican library has a weekly IT club. In Quarter 2 2022-23, the Barbican Children's Library plans to reopen its weekly, term-time Code Club in partnership with the national [Code Club organisation](#) where volunteers from Lloyds Banking Group teach children the coding languages Scratch and Python.
11. The [London Careers Festival \(LCF\) 2021](#) was delivered between 28 June – 2 July 2021, linking learners to the world of work with a mix of skills fairs, workshops, business fairs and experiences of workplaces, with a strong digital element. 45% of the scheduled sessions included creativity as a core skill. 50 organisations participated, over 14,000 pupils from 181 different schools attended, and 5 careers sessions were specifically focused on jobs in tech industries. 71% of young people expressed that they enjoyed joining the festival online, 85% of teachers said they would book pupils onto events next year and 92% would recommend the festival to other teachers and schools.
12. We are exploring work experience opportunities for digital. LCF in partnership with [Apprentice Futures](#) offered 11 employer-led webinars which explored apprenticeships as a career opportunity for secondary and post-16 pupils across sectors including digital and tech. LCF 2021 delivered two sessions with City of London Apprentices (which included apprentices working in digital and tech). The Skills forum continues to promote good quality work experience opportunities across the tech sector for young people.
13. We are championing and enabling learning to develop 21st century Fusion Skills through programmes that are a mix of academic, creative, digital and emotional learning. The [Education and Enterprise HUB – Space of Collective Intelligence](#) is now financed by the European Union and developed by a consortium made up of eight institutions, from five different European countries, including the City of London. The ED-EN HUB project is aimed to improve the quality of education, especially Vocational Education and Training, through the consolidation and systematisation of the relationship between education and enterprise. This is centred on the interface between fusion skills and digital skills. In October 2021, CoL hosted the first of the Multiplier Events for the Ed-En Hub project, attended by 70 experts and external stakeholder with a balance of expertise from education and enterprise. Vital discussions took place covering assessment and skills measurement, education, and enterprise experts.
14. The Adult Skills and Education Service (ASES)'s GLA-funded [Digital Hub](#) brings together digital training providers, employers, industry bodies and third sector

partners to support London's digital workforce. Targeting underrepresented groups residing on CoL estates, the Digital Hub supports residents to overcome barriers and develop the skills for entry level roles such as Junior Data Scientist. Partner employers like Amazon Web Services, the NHS and Direct Line supply expertise and training, whilst benefitting from access to an untapped local talent pool.

15. Amazon Web Services (AWS), the City of London Police and the City of London Corporation have partnered to launch a new project supporting the development of digital, business and fusion skills in Year 12 students, increasing their knowledge of the wide range of careers in the digital space and preparing them for success in the world of work. Over the Spring term, up to 50 students from five schools will take part in a series of interactive workshops led by experts from AWS, the City of London Police and the City of London Corporation. They will be introduced to a wide range of careers in technology including at AWS and the police, as well as how they can use technology to positively impact on the world. The project will culminate in a full-day challenge, where diverse students will use the skills and knowledge to present solutions to a challenge and pitch their ideas to a panel of experts.
16. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all schools in the CoL Family of Schools adapted to online learning platforms and forum engagement remained high, with schools reporting feeling well-supported by the City Corporation.
17. We are supporting the development of our own workforce through a series of [IT delivered courses and campaigns](#), including several new IT courses focussing on Office 365 apps such as SharePoint. There are multiple bespoke training videos, as well as other online learning resources such as CKTrainingPlus. Staff can view the [IT Tech Tips blog](#) and a quarterly [Sway newsletter](#) for the latest updates. We are promoting digital apprenticeships at various levels, including through national apprenticeship week and by targeting promotion at specific COL department . Currently 5 digital apprenticeships are in progress and a further 6 are being explored by staff.
18. **Priority 3 Citizenship:** In this priority, our aims are to work with individuals and communities, to consider how we can use digital skills to address barriers and gaps to improve access and participation; use digital skills to connect the capital, enable positive transitions and provide advice and support; and improve cyber, digital and financial inclusion and safety.
19. We provided targeted support, through a preloaded dongle, to help vulnerable or low-income households and shielding or self-isolating to access the internet to alleviate the immediate impact of lockdown. We distributed 43 portable 4G Wi-Fi hotspot 'dongles' which allowed vulnerable/low-income households access to the internet. As part of this, we asked residents if they had access to a digital device (laptop or computer) to access the internet, and whether they wanted support with receiving one. We re-referred residents to our grant funded partner, Mer-IT, who received a £10,000 community grant from us to supply digital devices to City residents where we identified need. 6 laptops were provided to City residents and 15 laptops were provided for Afghan refugees who are based at hotels in the City, to help them with learning and development. A Tech Takeback event was

organised by City of London Corporation in November 2021, with a number of donated devices being repurposed for citizens in need. Arrangements are being made for a further 10 laptops to be donated to a homelessness charity, [St Mungo's](#), for them to reuse.

20. Led by the Centre for the Acceleration for Social Technology (CAST), Catalyst is funded by DCMS, National Lottery Community Fund, Comic Relief, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Comic Relief, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and City Bridge Trust and aims to support thousands of charitable organisations to respond to the changing needs, behaviours and expectations of people and communities, using digital, design and data to achieve their charitable objectives and to create a thriving, stronger social sector. A further grant of £900,000, over five years (£200k, £200k, £200k, £175k, £125k) was approved in September 2021 for the continuation of the Catalyst digital network project, release of year two payments will be conditional on funding from the National Lottery Community Fund (or other funder(s) at a similar level of funding) being secured.
21. Superhighways (hosted by Kingston Voluntary Action). CBT are funding a partnership approach on behalf of the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) network across London which involves London Plus, HEAR Network, Coalition for Efficiency, DataKind UK, Makerble and the GLA. This project will focus on embedding digital skills within small organisations at the hyper-local level. A further grant of £345,000 over three years (£127,000; £109,000; £109,000) towards the further development and delivery of the Datawise London programme was approved in March 2022.
22. The London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) continues to broaden digital access to its collections and services. Recently created digital includes collections digitised in partnership with an academic publisher for a package aimed at University libraries titled Women's Studies; copies of audio recordings as the London hub for the national Unlocking Our Sound Heritage program led by the British Library and manuscript collections in partnership with the children's charity Coram (records of the Foundling Hospital). New digitisation for the historical images website, the London Picture Archive, has focussed on the map collections at LMA. A new responsive version of the London Picture Archive site greatly improves user experience on phones and tablets. New systems enable exploring maps, panoramas and large prints in detail, including the publication of the London County Council Bomb Damage Maps for the first time on our digital platforms. A new 'Digital Skills Framework' has been developed for LMA staff, providing easy access to training and guidance in digital systems and platforms, with the aim of raising levels of digital knowledge and capability across the organisation. LMA digital volunteering programs have attracted over 100 volunteers, enhancing metadata for historical photographs, identifying people of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous heritage in parish registers and creating descriptions of sound recordings. The digital infrastructure for visitors to LMA was improved this year with new Beelink mini PC terminals and digitisation studios were upgraded with new digitisation workstations for manuscripts and audio formats (provided by the grant funded Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project). In the period 2021/22 LMA recorded 47,230,114 page impressions or image views of LMA content on its websites and partner websites hosting LMA content. 12,952,483 users were recorded viewing LMA content or images across the websites (note that this data

isn't available for all sites). 243,240 content views were recorded on Facebook and Instagram, with 75,786 engagements across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Digital copies of films were viewed 104,334 times on YouTube.

23. During the pandemic, when CoL museums, attractions and archives were temporarily closed, we provided the Our City Together website as a central digital hub for CoL activities, and as a core part of our programming when we were unable to deliver outdoor arts. The site has since closed down but we will be building on the learnings of this project to inform future digital provision for culture and tourism, particularly as we look to implement a new Destination Strategy. Within the strategy, the digital offer remains a commitment stating that we will 'Create a new destination digital landing page or microsite to become the repository for all leisure-culture content, and further strengthen partnerships with visitor influencers capable of amplifying messaging'.
24. We are committed to promoting responsible procurement across CoL departments and digital Inclusion has been incorporated into our standard bank of responsible procurement questions and appears in a menu of social value options which bidders can select as a commitment. This includes Skilled volunteering - offering pro bono training/ workshops/ drop in-sessions on software on general computer literacy to job seekers/ social enterprises/ the voluntary sector to support digital inclusion amongst socially excluded groups. A similar question to the one used for our IT managed services contract has been included in the new Action Fraud Contract which is being tendered by City of London Police. Bidders will be given a menu of items to support digital inclusion and will be scored on their implementation plan. The menu includes digital skills workshops and resources uploaded to the City's Find Fusion website. We are also working on a reporting centrally for responsible procurement commitments from 2023.

Embedding Digital Skills

25. Over the past four years work, under the guidance of the Digital Skills Strategy SROs, Director Community and Children's Services and Director Innovation and Growth, has been taken forward in CoL departments and adopted into their digital skills approach and offer for the citizens and businesses we serve and for our own workforce. For the final year of the strategy, we will pay particular focus on supporting this continuing transition to embed the approach into BAU (Business as Usual) activity. The majority of actions we have identified and delivered will continue, though we will identify and develop new actions with departmental leads through a working group, and monitor progress. This will include sharing [LOTI's Digital Inclusion Research Report](#) outlining the approaches undertaken by the public, private and third sectors in tackling digital exclusion in London, to which the City of London Corporation contributed, with those who can contribute to reducing digital exclusion impacts. The LOTI report focuses on a range of digital inclusion interventions and the challenges and success factors in setting up digital inclusion interventions.
26. Going forward we intend to embed the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23 outcomes within our broader Skills, Culture and Responsible Business strategies as these are renewed. Alongside this, we will focus with Chief Officers on the City Corporation's own processes and capability to promote and grow our digital skills

and digitally enabled approached. We will also ensure there is close alignment between our continuing ambitions in delivering the digital skills outcomes that are detailed in the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23 and the development of the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan 2024-29.

Key Data

27. The list of the strategy Key Performance Indicators is at Appendix 2.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications – The Digital Skills Strategy 2018-2023 is aligned with and supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2018-23, in particular the following Corporate Plan outcomes:

- 3: People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential;
- 4: Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need;
- 5: Businesses are trusted and socially and environmentally responsible;
- 8: We have access to the skills and talent we need;
- 9: We are digitally and physically well-connected and responsive.

Financial implications - None

Resource implications - None

Legal implications - None

Risk implications - None

Equalities implications – The Digital Skills Strategy includes strategic aims to overcome barriers for people with protected characteristics and socioeconomic disadvantage and promote equality of opportunity.

Climate implications - None

Security implications - None

Conclusion

28. This report presents the continuing ambition to deliver on the Digital Strategy 2018-23 outcomes and ensure they become embedded into ongoing strategy development for our citizens, business and staff, and are aligned to our Corporate Plan 2024-29.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23
- Appendix 2 – Key Performance Indicators

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