



Council	Tuesday, 25 April 2017	Matter for Decision
----------------	-----------------------------------	----------------------------

Title: **Pilot Wi-fi Project for Wigston Town Centre**

Author: **Adrian Thorpe (Planning, Development and Regeneration Manager)**

1. Introduction

This pilot project concerns the provision of free wi-fi to the end user in Wigston town centre. As well as providing the free service that will greatly benefit and act as a 'draw' to people using the centre, it will enable non personal data to be collected on each person as they register (subject to approval), which then enables targeted marketing campaigns to be carried out to advertise key events and other initiatives.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Members approve a supplementary budget of £1,200 towards the first year revenue support for this project.
- 2.2. Wigston Residents' Forum be requested to provide 50% (£5,000) in matched capital funding, given that the Borough Council will commit to the future revenue costs of the scheme and that Leicestershire County Council has agreed to fund 50% (£5,000) of the installation costs.

3. Context and Background to the Project

- 3.1. Leicestershire's market towns play a vital role in the economy, having a combined economic value of £1.1 billion, similar to that of Leicester City and Fosse Park and collectively employ 25,000 people. High Streets are irreversibly changing, they are no longer just a destination for retail, people visit them to access services, take part in events and festivals and for leisure purposes.
- 3.2. Changes in technology mean that consumers purchase through multi-channels and items can be ordered on-line via mobile devices whilst still in-store. In particular independent stores, which make market towns unique, need to adapt to this changing environment, in order to compete, hence the need for wi-fi facilities in town centres.
- 3.3. Free public wi-fi will also add to the local offer of Wigston town centre, offering the public more than just a place to shop and access services. With many other town centres starting to offer free public wi-fi, Wigston would be in danger of being left behind and being unable to compete with other towns in the region.

4. Project Details

- 4.1. Leicestershire County Council has devised the project that will provide capital investment to install free wi-fi to the end user into five market town centres across the county. The County Council has identified Wigston as one of the five market towns. The project will have a positive economic impact by providing a free wi-fi service that will greatly benefit and act as a 'draw' to people using the centres. More importantly the data collected enables marketing campaigns to be carried out to advertise key events. Town centre performance has been difficult to assess, with not all towns having consistent measures such as footfall counters (Wigston has no footfall counters). This project will provide robust and consistent data, together with profiles on

the type of users in each centre and the frequency of which areas of the towns are utilised. This information will be valuable in terms of regeneration schemes to improve the retail flow and events to boost consumer spending.

- 4.2. In order to use the free wi-fi, members of the public will need to log into the system initially which creates a database of users. Information is collected on age range, gender and interests and enables targeted marketing campaigns to be carried out, together with linkages to rollout of loyalty card offers for example. The information collected will not be personal information like date of birth, address etc. The data also enables accurate footfall data to be obtained which is a key indicator of town centre health. The system is also future proof in that it can demonstrate 'heat maps' of busiest areas within the town centre etc.

5. Capital Costs

- 5.1. Leicestershire County Council has agreed to fund 50% of the wi-fi project, subject to the requirement that each town provides 50% match funding and that the only towns to be covered currently will be Loughborough (Phase 2), Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Coalville and Wigston.
- 5.2. The following involves one off capital installation costs for each town and the requested match funding:

Wigston	£10,000	match funding	£5,000
Loughborough: Phase Two	£35,000	match funding	£15,000
Melton Mowbray	£30,000	match funding	£15,000
Market Harborough	£30,000	match funding	£15,000
Coalville	£25,000	match funding	£10,000

It should be noted that the councils covering Melton, Market Harborough and Coalville have agreed to the match funding request.

- 5.3. Other towns in Leicestershire such as Oadby could follow in a subsequent phase. Accordingly the wi-fi project in Wigston will act as a pilot for this Borough providing information for the potential role out in future to Oadby and South Wigston.

6. Revenue Costs

In terms of revenue each town will be responsible for its own ongoing revenue costs with an initial commitment to 3 years. For Wigston this has been estimated as £1,200 per year for 3 years and this will need to be built into the annual revenue budget process. Subsequent revenue costs are estimated to be the same or less per year thereafter.

7. Procurement

Leicestershire County Council will provide the funding to the Borough Council which would be responsible for procurement. It may be possible to achieve this collectively with other district councils in order to negotiate the best deal.

8. Conclusion

It is considered that the wi-fi project for Wigston is something that would be of real benefit to the town especially since the project will enable valuable footfall data to be

gathered on a regular basis, which is not currently possible. This project will also act as a pilot for consideration of rolling out in the Borough's other two town centres.

Background Documents:-

None.

Email: judith.sturley@oadby-wigston.gov.uk

Tel: (0116) 257 2644

Implications	
Financial (CR)	In terms of ongoing revenue a commitment to 3 years is sought, which has been estimated at £1,200 per year for 3 years. A supplementary budget is required in respect of the first year (2017/18). Subsequent years' costs will be built into the Council's annual budget setting process. Wigston Residents' Forum is requested to provide 50% (£5,000) in matched capital funding, given that the Borough Council will commit to the future revenue costs of the scheme and that Leicestershire County Council has agreed to fund 50% (£5,000) of the installation costs.
Legal (AC)	No direct implications.
Risk (AT)	<p><i>Corporate Risk 1 Decreasing Financial Risk</i> <i>Corporate Risk 4 Reputation Damage</i></p> <p>This project will incur an initial cost, plus annual revenue costs as set out above. However should the Council decide not to participate in this scheme it will lose the ability to draw down funding already allocated by the County Council to the wi-fi projects in Leicestershire. Also businesses and visitors to the town centre will not be able to gain the benefits that accessible wi-fi will enable and there will not be the facility to gain footfall figures, data collection and to market events.</p>
Equalities (AT)	<p>The wi-fi project will be able to be accessed by anyone visiting the town centre should they wish to participate.</p> <p>Equality Assessment:-</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Initial Screening <input type="checkbox"/> Full Assessment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable</p>