



**Policy, Finance and  
Development  
Committee**

**Tuesday, 31 October  
2017**

**Matter for  
Information and  
Decision**

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

**Author(s): Adrian Thorpe (Head of Planning, Development and  
Regeneration)**

---

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 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, which then enables targeted marketing campaigns to be carried out to advertise key events and other initiatives.
- 1.2 A report on this matter has already been to Council on 25 April 2017, where funding of £6,200 was agreed, of which £5,000 was capital and £1,200 for the first year's revenue. The funding was based upon initial costings provided by a company called Elephant Wifi. On a subsequent visit to all town centres involved in the project there has now been a formal quotation provided by Elephant Wi-Fi.

## **2. Recommendation(s)**

That Members approve a further supplementary budget of £6,138 as match funding towards the capital and the first year revenue support for this project.

## **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, and 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.

## **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, one of which is Wigston. The economic impact of the project will be as well as providing the free 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 advertising key events. Town centre performance has been difficult to assess, with not all towns having consistent measures such as footfall counters (Wigston having no footfall counters) and this 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, people need to log into the system initially which creates a database of users. Information is collected on age, gender and interests and enables targeted marketing campaigns to be carried out, together with linkages to rollout of loyalty card offers for example. The data also enables accurate footfall data to be obtained which is a key indicator of town centre health. This data will be available to the Borough Council as well as the traders via reports we can send out. 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. Based upon initial costings, the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) and Leicestershire County Council had agreed to fund up to 50% of the Wi-Fi project and guaranteed £5,000 in match funding for Wigston, subject to the requirement that each town provided the remaining 50% match funding. The towns identified to be covered currently will be Loughborough Phase 2, Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Coalville, Barwell, Earl Shilton, Market Bosworth, Ashby, Lutterworth, Blaby and Wigston.
- 5.2. The initial costings involved one off capital installation costs for Wigston at £10,000 with an additional £1,200 in revenue costs.
- 5.3. However, since the initial costs were provided to Leicestershire County Council, a formal quotation has been delivered regarding the Wi-Fi installation, following a site meeting initiated by the Borough Council's Town Centre Manager with Elephant Wi-Fi. To enable the whole of Leicester Road and Bell Street to be covered with Wi-Fi, the capital cost of installing this would actually be £13,197.50. This is an increase of £3,197.50 over the original price. Unfortunately Leicestershire County Council and the LLEP have said that they will not increase their contribution to cover this increase. This reflects a similar situation that has also arisen in some of the other towns.
- 5.4. There is still the ability to move forward with the installation of Wi-Fi in Wigston town centre based upon funding already approved by Full Council, although this would reduce the coverage of the Wi-Fi to just Bell Street and part of Leicester Road. Therefore this would mean less coverage for Wigston town centre.

## **5. Revenue Costs**

In terms of revenue each town will be responsible for its own ongoing revenue costs with a commitment to 3 years. For Wigston the original estimate of annual costs was £1,200 per year for 3 years. Since the final quotation has come in the actual ongoing revenue costs will increase to £2,400 per year for 3 years, due to more equipment being needed and therefore more ongoing costs, there is also a cost for line rental, which was not included in the original costing, which comes to £1,800 for the 3 years. The ongoing revenue costs include all maintenance and operational issues, which means there would be no additional costs to Oadby & Wigston Borough Council to those identified above.

## **6. Total Project Costs**

Council has already agreed the allocation of £6,200 towards this project based upon initial costings. In order to move forward with the full project as described in this

report an additional £6,138 is required, as set out below:

**Capital Costs**

<b>Install</b>	£13,198
<b>Line rental</b>	£1,800

**Revenue**

<b>Operation</b>	£2,340
<b>Total</b>	£17,338
<b>Match Funding</b>	£5,000
<b>OWBC Agreed Funding</b>	£6,200
<b>Difference</b>	£6,138

The difference is then split between the following:

<b>Revenue</b>	£1,140
<b>Capital</b>	£4,998
<b>Difference</b>	£6,138

**7. Procurement**

Leicestershire County Council and the LLEP will provide their contributions towards the funding to the Borough Council and the Borough Council would be responsible for procurement. However it is envisaged this could be done collectively with other districts in order to negotiate the best deal.

**8. Conclusion**

- 8.1. 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 possible currently, and to act as a pilot for role out consideration in the Borough's other two town centres.
- 8.2. Although there has been an increase in the price from the original estimate, the project is seen as beneficial not only to residents, but to businesses and to the Borough Council. The larger the area that is covered, the better in terms of footfall monitoring and therefore it would be beneficial to go ahead with the project to cover the whole of Leicester Road.
- 8.3. Other towns in Leicestershire such as Oadby could follow in a subsequent phase. Accordingly the wi-fi project in Wigston would act as a pilot for this Borough providing information for the potential role out in future to Oadby and South Wigston.

**Background Documents:**

Report of the Planning, Policy and Regeneration Manager entitled 'Pilot Wi-Fi Project for Wigston Town Centre' to Council on 25 April 2017

<b>Implications   Pilot Wi-Fi Project for Wigston Town Centre</b>	
<p><b>Financial</b></p> <p><b>Chris Raymakers</b> (Head of Finance, Revenue and Benefits)</p>	<p>Additional funding is required to cover the match funding capital cost for the installation of this scheme. This was not addressed when putting together the economic regeneration budget for the financial year 2017/18 because the project had not been devised when budgets were set.</p> <p>In terms of ongoing revenue a commitment to 3 years is required, which has been estimated as £2,400 per year for 3 years. Whilst the first year's revenue cost will need to be part of the supplementary budget the following two years can be met during the budget setting for the subsequent two years. Capital costs would need to be identified from within the Council's capital programme. Revenue costs will be built into revenue budgets.</p>
<p><b>Legal</b></p> <p><b>Dave Gill</b> (Deputy Monitoring Officer)</p>	<p>There are no direct legal implications.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Risk(s) (CR)</b></p> <p><b>Adrian Thorpe</b> (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Decreasing Financial Resources (CR1)</b></p> <p>Should the Council decide not to participate in this scheme they will lose the ability to access the funding already allocated by the County Council to the Wi-Fi project in Wigston and businesses and visitors to the town centre will not be able to gain the benefits that accessible Wi-Fi will enable. The facility to gain footfall figures, data collection and marketing of events will also be lost.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Economy/Regeneration (CR9)</b></p> <p>Failure to move ahead with this project could lead to towns like Wigston being left behind and other centres having an advantage. Therefore Wigston could decline economically as a result.</p>
<p><b>Corporate Priorities (CP)</b></p> <p><b>Adrian Thorpe</b> (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>An Inclusive and Engaged Borough (CP1)</b></p> <p>Information will be able to be shared with members of the public in a direct way.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Balanced Economic Development (CP3)</b></p> <p>The Wi-Fi system will provide the Borough Council with footfall data as well as give a direct link to members of the public and will allow the Council to discover demographic information regarding shoppers/visitors to Wigston. This could then lead to increased economic benefit as the data can be used to target more effectively.</p>
<p><b>Vision &amp; Values (V)</b></p> <p><b>Adrian Thorpe</b> (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration)</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Innovation (V4)</b></p> <p>The project for town centre Wi-Fi is innovative in respect that very few town centres across the country have free public Wi-Fi. Also the fact that we can count the footfall with the system is also an innovative use of technology.</p>

<b>Equalities &amp; Equality Assessment(s) (EA)</b>	The wi-fi project will be able to be accessed by anyone visiting the town centre should they wish to participate.
<b>Adrian Thorpe</b> (Head of Planning, Development and Regeneration)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Not Applicable</b>