



**Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) - Joint Committee**

**The meeting originally due to be held at 10.00 am on 22 September 2022 will now be held at 10.00am on 20 October 2022**

**Place: Council Chamber, Castle Point Borough Council, Kiln Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 1TF**

**Contact: Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Thurrock Council**

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**AGENDA**

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<b>3 Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>	<b>1 - 8</b>
To agree the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 14 July 2022.	
<b>4 Chairman's Report - Verbal Update</b>	
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**Members:**

Cllr A Baggott (Leader - Basildon Borough Council), Cllr D Blackwell (Leader - Castle Point Borough Council), Cllr K Bentley (Leader - Essex County Council), Cllr M Coxshall (Deputy Leader - Thurrock Borough Council), Cllr S George (Leader - Southend-on-Sea City Council), Cllr C Hossack (Leader - Brentwood Borough Council), Cllr S Wootton (Leader - Rochford District Council and P Glading (Opportunity South Essex (Co-opted Member))



## Meeting of Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) - Joint Committee

**Date: Thursday, 14th July, 2022**

**Place: Council Chamber, Castle Point Borough Council, Kiln Road, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 1TF**

**Present:** Councillor C Hossack (Chair) (Brentwood Borough Council)  
Councillors S Wootton (Vice-Chair) (Rochford District Council), A Baggott (Basildon Borough Council), D Blackwell (Castle Point Borough Council), M Coxshall (Thurrock Borough Council) and S George (Southend-on-Sea City Council)

**In Attendance:** I Butt (Castle Point Borough Council), L Carpenter (Thurrock Borough Council), A Horgan, A Hutchings (Castle Point Borough Council), A Lewis (Southend-on-Sea City Council), S Logan (Basildon Borough Council), J Stephenson (Brentwood Borough Council and Rochford District Council), A Wardle (ASELA Communications Lead), S Tautz (Southend-on-Sea City Council), R Whiteley (Thurrock Borough Council) and L Wosko (Castle Point Borough Council)

**Start/End Time:** 10.00 am - 12.05 pm

### **1 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair**

On the nomination of Councillor S Wootton and with the unanimous support of the Joint Committee:

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor C Hossack be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

On the nomination of Councillor C Hossack and with the unanimous support of the Joint Committee:

Resolved:

- (2) That Councillor S Wootton be elected as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year.

### **2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Bentley (Leader - Essex County Council), P Glading (Chairman - Opportunity South Essex (Co-Opted Member)), G Jones (Chief Executive - Essex County Council), M Doran (Essex County Council) and P Bates, E Helm (Southend-on-Sea City Council).

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

#### **4 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 February 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

#### **5 ASELA Joint Committee - Review of Governance Arrangements**

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Monitoring Officer for Basildon Borough Council, regarding the annual review of the governance documents for the Joint Committee recently undertaken by the Monitoring Officers, Chief Financial (Section 151) Officers and Chief Executives of the ASELA local authorities, to ensure that the governance arrangements for the Committee remained fit for purpose to support the developing ambitions of ASELA.

It was reported that the review of the governance arrangements had identified that it would be beneficial to clarify that the proceedings of the Joint Committee were bound by the provisions of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972, but that constituent local authorities had agreed to operate in accordance with the arrangements set out in the governing documents. The Joint Committee was advised that this approach primarily related to the provision that there be no arrangement for a casting vote and for decisions that affected an individual local authority to require the specific support of that authority rather than simple agreement by a majority vote. Members noted that it was proposed that such clarification be made through the inclusion of an additional relevant provision within the governance documents for the Joint Committee.

The Joint Committee was advised that, arising from the recent review of the governing documents, Monitoring Officers were developing an Assurance Framework to provide clarity and understanding of operating arrangements and processes across the key programmes of ASELA, to ensure that these were consistent and fit for purpose as the programmes progressed.

Members considered that it was also important to ensure that the activities of the Joint Committee were subject to robust overview and scrutiny arrangements, notwithstanding that the governance documents already made provision for the work of ASELA to be subject to scrutiny through each of the constituent local authorities' own overview and scrutiny processes.

Resolved:

- (1) That the report of the annual review of the governing documents for the Joint Committee, be noted.
- (2) The following additional provision be added to the governing documents as new Paragraph 1.8:  
  
‘The Joint Committee and its proceedings are bound by Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972; however constituent authorities have agreed and shall be expected to operate in accordance with the local arrangements set out in the Governing Documents.’
- (3) That the Joint Committee note that no other changes are considered to be required to the governing documents at this time.
- (4) That the ongoing development of an Assurance Framework to provide clarity and understanding of operating arrangements and processes across the ASELA key programmes, for consideration at a future meeting of the Joint Committee, be noted.

- (5) That Monitoring Officers be requested to consider the effectiveness of current arrangements for the activities of the Joint Committee to be subject to overview and scrutiny by each of the constituent local authorities' and report on any changes required to achieve a robust scrutiny process for the Joint Committee, to the next meeting.

## **6 ASELA Joint Committee - Accountable Body & Secretariat Arrangements**

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Interim Director of Financial Services for Southend-on-Sea City Council, with regard to the proposed transfer of the role of Accountable Body for ASELA from Castle Point Borough Council to Southend-on-Sea City Council and for the transfer of the future provision of secretariat support for the Joint Committee, from Southend-on-Sea City Council to Thurrock Borough Council.

Members were reminded that the governing documents for the Joint Committee required that the designation of an 'Accountable Body' should be agreed by the Committee in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA. A Lewis indicated that, as a result of the likely growth in the future scope and responsibilities of the partnership, it was recommended that this responsibility should be transferred to Southend-on-Sea City Council who were in a position to provide adequate capacity and resources to enable the Accountable Body to implement appropriate control around the finances of ASELA and to support the proposed Assurance Framework.

The Joint Committee was advised that the governing documents also required that a local authority be designated to provide secretariat services to the Committee and were informed that, in order to facilitate the sharing of support responsibilities across the constituent local authorities', it was proposed that ongoing provision of such secretariat services should transfer to Thurrock Borough Council pursuant to the assumption of the Accountable Body role by Southend-on-Sea City Council.

Resolved:

- (1) That Southend-on-Sea City Council act as the Accountable Body in relation to the functions and resources of ASELA with immediate effect, until further notice.
- (2) That Thurrock Borough Council provide secretariat services to the Joint Committee with immediate effect, until further notice.
- (3) That the appreciation of the Joint Committee for the support of Castle Point Borough Council in undertaking the role of Accountable Body for the functions and resources of ASELA to date, be noted.
- (4) That the appreciation of the Joint Committee for the support of Southend-on-Sea City Council in the provision of secretariat services for ASELA and the Committee to date, be noted.

## **7 Association of South Essex Local Authorities - Finance Report**

The Joint Committee received the ASELA finance report for June 2022, which set out the current financial position for the partnership and provide assurance in relation to the arrangements for financial management and reporting in respect of the ASELA budget.

Members were advised that the provisional outturn for 2021/22 currently showed an in-year deficit of £251,000, which was predominately related to funding of £240,000 expected from Homes England not being received during the year, although the surplus brought forward from previous years had the effect of reducing the actual deficit for the year to £174,000.

The Joint Committee was informed that significant effort had been made to secure the outstanding funding from Homes England, but that it had not proved possible to find a solution that would allow Homes England to fund the work that had been completed in anticipation of the promised funding being received. It was reported however that, since the preparation of the report and as a result of new powers given to Homes England by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Homes England had formally confirmed in writing that it would be able to make the funding of £250,000 to ASELA, although the mechanism for the settlement of the funding arrangement had not yet been confirmed by Homes England.

The Joint Committee was advised that the provisional outturn for 2022/23 currently showed an in-year deficit of £74,000 in addition to the deficit for 2021/22 of £174,000 but that, once the outstanding funding had been secured from Homes England, it was expected that this would eradicate the current budget deficit.

Resolved:

- (1) That the ASELA Finance Report for June 2022, be noted.
- (2) That should the outstanding funding of £240,000 due from Homes England to fund work already completed by ASELA not be received, proposals for the eradication of the forecast budget deficit for 2022/23 be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- (3) That the Chair write to Homes England and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (as appropriate) on behalf of the Joint Committee, expressing concern at the implications of the apparent delay in the receipt of the outstanding funding on the delivery of the key programmes of ASELA and seeking the settlement of the funding arrangement as soon as possible.
- (4) That appropriate updates on the progress of the settlement of the funding arrangement with Homes England be provided to all members of the Joint Committee in advance of the next meeting.

## **8 Thames Freeport Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of current progress with regard to the Thames Freeport programme.

L Carpenter reported that the final Business Case developed by the Thames Freeport partners had been submitted to the Government during April 2022, the decision on which was still awaited.

The Chair suggested that going forward, the Thames Freeport programme should be regarded as a key element of the delivery of an overall economic growth ambition for South Essex by ASELA rather than as a standalone programme and that it would also be helpful for the ASELA region to be formally defined as a Functional Economic Area. L Carpenter indicated that discussions around the review of the current key programmes in terms of the broader economic corridor of South Essex, had already been initiated by Chief Executives and that appropriate proposals for the refresh of the key programmes as overarching themes, would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee for consideration.

The Joint Committee considered that, as part of the review of the Thames Freeport programme, the opportunity should also be taken to ensure that the other key programmes of ASELA were appropriately focussed on economic growth and the provision of housing, transport, skills, infrastructure and the environment, with existing and future activity being delivered as part of the proposed overarching programme

themes. L Carpenter reported that the possible identification of Lead Members/Project Sponsors for the ASELA programmes to support the delivery of activity and outcomes alongside the lead officers for each programme, had also recently been discussed by Chief Executives.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress of the Thames Freeport programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.
- (2) That a report on the review and refresh of the current ASELA key programmes as overarching themes to support economic growth and the provision of housing, transport, skills, infrastructure and the environment for South Essex, be made to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- (3) That proposals for the identification of Lead Members/Project Sponsors for the overarching key programmes, to support the delivery of activity and outcomes alongside Chief Executives going forward, be made to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

## **9 South Essex Estuary Park Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of current progress with regard to the South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) programme.

L Carpenter reported that the full business case for each of the landscape spaces within the SEE Park was currently being developed, alongside an indicative programme delivery plan and the identification of an appropriate governance framework for the SEE PARK to ensure its future self-funding independence, which was to be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee for consideration.

The Joint Committee indicated that it was important to maintain focus on the benefits of the SEE Park for the whole of the South Essex area and to protect the programme from the challenges presented by other landscape regeneration issues in the ASELA area, particularly those arising from the delivery of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

Members were pleased to be advised of the national recognition being generated by the delivery of the SEE Park programme, including the recent nomination of the programme for the global World Architecture Festival Awards for 2022.

Resolved:

That the progress of the South Essex Estuary Park (SEE Park) programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.

## **10 Digital Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of current progress with regard to the Digital programme.

J Stephenson reported that the installation of over 200km of full fibre infrastructure across the ASELA region had recently been completed, to connect public sector sites including libraries, sheltered accommodation, schools, fire stations and community and village halls. The Joint Committee was advised that the next element of the programme was It was reported that the taking of service from the fibre installation, which was a key requirement of the grant funding for the programme and the point at which real benefit would be delivered. J Stephenson reported that a procurement process was currently underway for the taking of service, which was to be concluded by the end of August 2022.

The Joint Committee requested that a presentation on the successful outcomes arising from the programme to date be made to the next meeting of the Joint Committee and that appropriate fibre carriers and infrastructure providers be invited to attend the meeting to outline their experiences of the delivery of the programme and the opportunities that it can bring to stimulate investment for South Essex, particularly in 'not spot' areas.

Members requested that details of the specific outcomes achieved from the Digital programme so far and the current level of return on investment achieved from the delivery of the programme, be included in future highlight reports made to the Joint Committee.

Resolved:

That the progress of the Digital programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.

## **11 Housing Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of current progress with regard to the Housing programme.

The Chair sought clarification of the implications for the delivery of the programme, arising from the current delay in the settlement of the funding arrangement with Homes England previously raised as part of the consideration of the ASELA finance report for June 2022. J Stephenson highlighted that, despite the delay in the settlement of the funding arrangement, a significant amount of work with partners including Homes England had been achieved on the delivery of aspects of the programme.

The Joint Committee was advised that there was a need to allocate additional resources to the delivery of the programme and that provision had been made within the current ASELA budget for recruitment to a Programme Director position to lead the programme. Members noted that the programme was currently being delivered on the basis of the 'in kind' officer capacity allocated by the ASELA local authorities, but that this arrangement would not be sustainable for the full delivery of the programme going forward.

J Stephenson reported that Homes England were currently working with partners on technical assessments for seven 'pipeline' sites across the ASELA area to deliver approximately 1,000 new homes, many of which already had planning permission, but each of which also had complex needs in terms of the unlocking of development potential. I Butt reassured the Joint Committee that this aspect of the programme did not cut across the local plans of the constituent local authorities and that it sought to identify and utilise collective resources in a coordinated approach to facilitating the delivery of new housing development on stalled sites.

Members requested that, subject to the consideration of any commercial sensitivities, details of the 'long list' of sites included in the programme be incorporated in future programme highlight reports made to the Joint Committee and that the specific individual requirements of each of the pipeline sites that were needed to be resolved to facilitate the unlocking of previously approved development schemes, also be included in future reports, in tabular form.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress of the Housing programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.



- (2) That the RAG status for the programme be reviewed at the next meeting of the Joint Committee, in the event that the outstanding funding arrangement has not been settled by Homes England at that time.

## **12 South Essex Technical University Programme - Highlight Report**

The Joint Committee received an overview of current progress with regard to the South Essex Technical University programme.

S Logan reported that, following the approval of the full business case for the Technical University by the Partnership Board in March 2022, letters of commitment had been received from the main business supporters to confirm their continued commitment to the programme and the provision of an agreed number of learners from September 2023 onwards. Members were advised that two further businesses had also now confirmed support for the establishment of the University.

The Joint Committee considered the Business Case and Financial Model for the Technical University and the establishment of a Business Advisory Forum to support wider business interest around the University. S Logan reported that the proposed Financial Model was considered to be commercially viable, but that pump-priming funding would be required from ASELA. The Joint Committee was informed that resources had been made available by Essex County Council to support the provision of professional support for the procurement of the higher education provider for the Technical University by October 2022.

The Joint Committee received video presentations prepared by senior management representatives of key business supporting the establishment of the South Essex Technical University.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress of the South Essex Technical University programme be noted and that the continued provision of support to deliver the programme, be endorsed.
- (2) That the South Essex Technical University Business Case and Financial Model be endorsed.
- (3) That the commitment of ASELA funding of £60,000 in 2022/23 to enable the appointment of advisers to continue to move the project forward, be agreed.
- (4) That appropriate updates on the progress of the procurement of the higher education provider for the South Essex Technical University, be provided to all members of the Joint Committee in advance of the next meeting.

## **13 Association of South Essex Local Authorities - Communications Report**

The Joint Committee received an update on recent communications activity to support ASELA and its key programmes, following the agreement of a broad communications and engagement strategy to support the key programmes at the previous meeting of the Committee.

A Wardle reported that ASELA had continued to benefit from a high profile since the previous meeting through external recognition and had increased its social media following. Members were advised however, that proactive communications opportunities had been limited during the recent pre-election period but that, as the key programmes moved increasingly into delivery mode, opportunities for positive promotion and engagement would increase.

The Joint Committee considered proposed key messages and proof points for future communications activity, arising from the endorsement of the ASELA communications and engagement strategy.

Resolved:

- (1) That the ASELA Communications Report be noted.
- (2) That the proposed key messages for future communications activity contained in Section 3 of the report, be agreed.

#### **14 Other Business**

The Chair raised the following additional item of business:

##### **(a) Integrated Care Partnership**

The Chair suggested that Jo Cripps, the Executive Director (Strategy and Partnerships) of the Mid and South Essex Integrated Care System, should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Joint Committee to discuss how ASELA could support the Integrated Care Partnership around its priority to achieve health equity through good education, opportunities for employment, decent housing and a vibrant local economy.



<b>22 September 2022</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>ASELA Joint Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>ASELA Financial Report</b>	
Report of: Elizabeth Helm, Southend-On-Sea City Council	
Programme Implementation Director: N/A	
Accountable Programme SRO: N/A	
This report is Public	

## Executive Summary

This report is intended to:

- Present the latest 2022/23 forecast for ASELA, based on currently approved programmes of work.

## Report

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The budget for ASELA is set at the start of the financial year and adjusted throughout the year as plans are changed and updated. Provisional budgets for future years are also compiled to aid longer term financial planning.
- 1.2. Southend-on-Sea City Council maintain a separate accounting structure for ASELA and produce financial monitoring reports which are shared with Programme Implementation Directors, ASELA Chief Executives and Finance leads.
- 1.3. Financial and operational monitoring is enabled through the routine highlight reporting mechanism undertaken by each Programme Implementation Director, supported by a Finance lead, and which are also reported on this agenda.
- 1.4. Financial implications detailed in highlight reports are monitored against the budget set at the start of the financial year. Changes to a programme budget may occur when additional external funding is confirmed which enables increased programme spend or when unavoidable costs have been incurred.

## 2. 2022/23 Current Forecast

2.1. The 2021/22 outturn and the 2022/23 forecast income and expenditure for ASELA is summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1 Income and Expenditure Summary	2021/22 £000's	2022/23 £000's	2023/24 £000's
<b>Income</b>			
Partnership Investment (ASELA authorities)	(420)	(420)	(420)
Other partners			
Homes England	180	(250)	0
Highways England	(65)	(900)	0
SE Tech Uni - private sector investment	(30)	0	0
SE Tech Uni - Opportunity South Essex	(20)		
Digital - SELEP Getting Building Fund		(631)	
Additional funding ASELA authorities			
SEE Park - Thurrock	(200)	0	0
SE Tech Uni - Essex CC	(60)	(75)	0
Cost Reimbursement (Thurrock/Freeport)	(30)	0	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(645)</b>	<b>(2,276)</b>	<b>(420)</b>
<b>Programme Expenditure</b>			
SEE Park	387	1,015	25
South Essex Technical University	161	155	0
Full Fibre Digital	49	761	25
Thames Freeport	60	0	0
Infrastructure and Housing	118	114	0
Operating and Other Costs	121	55	55
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>896</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>In year (surplus) / deficit</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>(176)</b>	<b>(315)</b>
<b>ASELA Reserve</b>	<b>2021/22 £000's</b>	<b>2022/23 £000's</b>	<b>2023/24 £000's</b>
Balance brought forward	(77)	174	(2)
Non-ringfenced in year (surplus) / deficit	271	(196)	(315)
Ringfenced income: SE Tech Uni	(20)	20	0
Net in year (surplus) / deficit	251	(176)	(315)
Balance carried forward	174	(2)	(317)

2022/23 Forecast



2.2. The current 2022/23 forecast is a surplus of **£176k** following the agreement by Homes England to grant fund ASELA **£250k** of funding.

2.3. As a result, the forecast is for ASELA to end 2022/23 with a surplus of **£2k**.

**3. Recommendation:**

**3.1 That the Joint Committee note the content of the report.**

**Report Author:**

**Elizabeth Helm**

**Southend-On-Sea City Council**

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<b>Report Date:</b>	September 2022	<b>Decisions Required:</b>	Request the joint committee:  1. To note the progress of the programme and to endorse the continued support to deliver the programme
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>ASELA SEEPARK (South Essex Estuary) Park</b>		
<b>ASELA Chief SRO:</b>	<b>Lyn Carpenter</b>		
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b>	Sharon Bayliss		
<b>Lead Officer/Programme Manager:</b>	Scott Dolling & Steve Plumb		

**Programme Summary**

**Overall Programme Summary**

This SEEPARK (South Essex) Estuary Park vision was conceived in the now multiple award-winning *South Essex Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Study*, commissioned by ASELA in 2019.

SEEPARK is placing nature at the heart of economic growth and place-making across South Essex, SEEPARK aims to ensure that South Essex becomes the best place it can be by leveraging the natural environment and green/blue space that it enjoys. SEEPARK will deliver significant place-making benefits:

- Economically by enabling sustainable development, increasing eco-tourism, encouraging (promoting) the creation of green tech jobs, and providing local business with the ability to carbon offset at scale
- Socially by providing better access to green space, positively supporting health and wellbeing and encouraging connected active travel networks.
- Environmentally by mitigating climate change and flooding by creating adaptive landscapes, delivering 24,000 hectares of connected and protected landscapes and enhancing biodiversity.

SEEPARK will protect, link and nurture five varied large-scale landscapes<sup>i</sup> covering 24,000 hectares across South Essex. These areas already contain existing initiatives that are starting to deliver large scale landscape and habitat improvements. SEEPARK will connect them, thus creating:

- A high-quality green space within 500m of every front door or workplace, starting with new developments and re-developments
- 175 km of connected walking and cycle routes, including a continuous 70km coastal path from Tilbury Fort to Shoeburyness
- 2,500 hectares of enhanced park and recreational areas
- 4,500 hectares of woodlands and grasslands
- 7,500 hectares of marshlands and wetlands
- 8,500 hectares of improved agriculture and semi-natural green space
- 1,000 hectares of golf courses with potential for habitat enhancement

SEEPARK is enshrined within the emerging South Essex Framework as a central theme to place-making and a critical infrastructure for housing and employment growth. SEEPARK also addresses the requirements of the Environment Act including helping deliver the 10% minimum Biodiversity Net Gain for land development.

**Programme Resources**

The programme is adequately resourced and within budget spend, there are no resource implications that are impacting programme delivery

**Unplanned Requests/Activities**

There are no unplanned requests that impact the delivery of the programme



Project Status (What is going well/not going well):	Description of RAG Status and Key Project Decisions/Direction/Action:	
<p><b>A summary of recent focus:</b></p> <p><b>Business Case</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A business case for each of the 5 landscape spaces is complete, the Business Case supports the vision previously endorsed by ASELA. In summary, it               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sets out how SEEPARK will be planned and coordinated, it will be delivered over a large number of phases as external funding and opportunities become available.</li> <li>enables SEEPARK be delivered by a wide range of partners and landowners.</li> <li>considers the resource requirements over multiple years.</li> <li>helps to cascade SEEPARK into local plans, environmental plans, including bio-diversity action plans, and be a tool that will fully integrate with other ASELA priorities, infrastructure investment plans and place-making.</li> </ul> </li> <li>can be used as evidence to support local plans, master planning, infrastructure delivery plans, CIL setting and section 106 agreements.</li> <li>SEEPARK will be developed as an independent self-funding model, a structured matrix of more than 60 funding programmes and over 20 charitable trusts have been identified as external funding streams for the programme</li> </ul> <p><b>Pathfinder Demonstrator Project Delivery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 1a of the Central Thames Pathfinder is in the early stages of delivery utilising funding from National Highways. Detailed discussions now underway with Natural England, Thameside Nature Reserve, RSPB and other relevant landowners are underway. Target date for delivery Summer 2023</li> <li>The Creative workstream is in progress and its aim is to lead and develop on the key strategies and actions that would have the most beneficial impact on the creative offer for the South Essex area through SEEPARK and the other ASELA anchor programmes for the future economic growth of the creative industries in South Essex. Exploration of joint funding bids is currently underway.</li> </ul>	Scope	GREEN
	Risk	GREEN
	Issue	GREEN
	Cost	GREEN
	Time	GREEN
	<p><b>Explanation of any Amber or Red RAG Statuses (including any decisions, direction or actions required)</b></p>	

PROJECT / MILESTONE TAG	STATUS KEY
<b>Will not be met</b>	Project / milestone is definitely off track and does not yet have an effective recovery plan (recovery plan may involve re-planning milestones, scope, etc.). Significantly outside tolerances. One or more RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor action required.
<b>Under Threat</b>	Project / milestone is already off track, but has a recovery plan in place OR is in danger of going off track if current trends continue, therefore needs a remediation plan OR was on red and is still in recovery mode. Marginally outside project tolerances. No RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor oversight required.
<b>On Track</b>	Project being managed effectively. On track and confident of staying on track. Within project tolerances (budget, timescale, functionality).
<b>Blue</b>	Complete

<sup>i</sup> Central Thames Marshland, Island Wetlands, Central Woodland Arc, Mardyke Valley, Brentwood Parklands

<b>Report Date:</b>	August 2022	<b>Decisions Required:</b>	No decisions required at this time.
<b>Programme Name:</b>	South Essex Technical University		
<b>ASELA Chief SRO:</b>	Scott Logan		
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b>	Jim Sims		
<b>Lead Officer/Programme Manager:</b>	Jim Sims/Martin Whiteley		

## Programme Summary

### Programme Purpose

The South Essex Technical University (SETU) aims to enhance the delivery of higher-level technical skills in South Essex, to provide opportunities for local people to secure high-skill jobs; supporting local firms to secure the skills they need to grow; and support the retention / attraction of high quality firms into the area. SETU seeks to provide skills programmes to support employed learners, new career entrants and employees needing to reskill.

### Mobilisation Plan

Following the endorsement of the Full Business Case by the ASELA JC in July 2022, and the commitment of £60k of ASELA Funding for 2022/23 (to add to the £20k secured from OSE and the £75k secured from Essex County Council) the Programme Board has started to implement the Mobilisation Plan they have developed to move the project forward to the next stage. Key workstreams we are focussing on in this regard are:

- Stakeholder Communications and Engagement
- Developing the Operating Company
- Appointment of an HE Adviser
- Procurement of an HE Provider
- Securing Investment Finance from the Thames Freeport

The Programme Board – which comprises representatives from Basildon Council, Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Thames Freeport, together with the ASELA Communications Lead meets on a bi-weekly basis to drive the programme forward and has nominated workstream leads from within this group to drive the programme forward. The Partnership Board, comprising the main business sponsors, meets on a bi-monthly basis, with the next meeting planned for September 2022. In addition to involving representatives from Ford, Leonardo, Olympus, DP World and Southend Airport, TEVVA Motors have recently agreed to join the Partnership and will attend from the September Board. Turning to each of the above workstreams in turn:

## **Stakeholder Communications and Engagement**

The ASELA Communications Lead has developed a Stakeholder Communication and Engagement Plan, which was signed off by the Partnership Board in July 2022. Key audiences in the Plan are Strategic stakeholders (such as business partners, government and public sector partners); HE institutions; Business supporters; Schools and staff Students and young people. We have also recently developed a number of videos of members of the Partnership Board talking about why the establishment of the South Essex Technical University is so important to them and their businesses. These can be found at Basildon Council (<https://youtu.be/7ptzGTVe6Ck>), DP World (<https://youtu.be/y23o4FcRaYw>), Ford (<https://youtu.be/EfObBL1Ruoo>), Leonardo (<https://youtu.be/u6d042LMS6Y>). Opportunity South Essex has agreed to lead the work to establish a Business Supporters Group and we will be implementing some focussed actions over the coming months to raise awareness of the initiative within the business community.

## **Developing the Operating Company (OpCO)**

As highlighted at the last JC, over the next six months or so, we envisage this Partnership Board will evolve to become a new Operating Company, Limited by Guarantee. The operating company will procure the HE provider to deliver the planned courses. A new Board will be needed to oversee the activities of the Operating Company. We have now appointed Pinsent Mason's to help us develop the governance model of the OpCO, with their work focussing on two key phases of work, advising the partnership on the structuring and incorporation of the OpCo and preparing the necessary legal documentation.

## **Appointment of an HE Adviser**

In addition to putting in place a legal adviser to support us on the establishment of the OpCo, we are also seeking to use an element of our 2022/23 operational budget to bring in a specialist HE Adviser who will play a crucial role helping us secure a high quality and innovative HE provider to deliver the University. The adviser will ensure we specify the required services correctly to achieve the overall model and the specific courses that the businesses need and provide expert HE input through the procurement process. Essex County Council are leading this workstream and the indicative timelines for securing this HE Adviser are that the deadline for bids is the 22 August, with the goal of having the resource in place by the start of September.

## **Procurement of an HE Provider**

As far as the timelines for securing an HE provider is concerned, this will be developed through discussion with the HE Adviser, but we are aiming to commence the procurement process with some formal market warming exercises in September, with the goal of having the HE provider in place by the end of Autumn. Our approach to securing the right provider to deliver this innovative programme will likely focus on an engagement process which aims to highlight this opportunity to a range of high quality HE providers and to utilise a negotiated procedure, to allow us to maintain a dialogue with a number of potential providers to ensure we select a provider that shares the same vision for the potential opportunity as the participating businesses.

## **Securing Investment Finance from the Thames Freeport**

As we have highlighted previously, the proposed financial model is one that is viable and sustainable for both the Operating Company and the HE partner. After initial investment to commence delivery, the Operating Company is expecting to deliver financial surpluses and also annually increase the funding of educational projects and bursaries across South Essex. Over the first 10 years the full level of investment needed to deliver the technical university is £35 million, with much of this funding forecast to

come from business Apprenticeship Levies. Over the same period the level of public sector investment required is estimated to be £1.9 million (which represents 5.4% of the overall total). The business model proposes using retained business rates funding to create the initial operational capacity, and early discussions with the Thames Freeport and Thurrock Council (as the Accountable Body for the Thames Freeport) have been broadly positive so far, although we continue to monitor timelines the UK government formally approving the Thames Freeport Business Case.

### **Recommendation**

The ASELA JC is asked to note the above developments.

### **Programme Resources**

As set out above, the current mobilisation plan that has been developed points towards the requirement for £155,000 of funding being needed to progress the next phase of the project (i.e., the establishment of the Operating Company and the procurement of an HE Provider). At the time of writing, we have secured this funding from a combination of Essex County Council (£75k), ASELA (£60k) and Opportunity South Essex (£20k) to ensure momentum is maintained.

In addition, we continue to talk to the Thames Freeport and Thurrock Council (as the Accountable Body for the Thames Freeport) about them potentially providing the investment required in the first two years of the life of the Operating Company to capitalise its start-up costs and monitor the timelines of the approval of Thames Freeport Business Case (as this is a dependency on our own programme).

**Unplanned Requests/Activities** - None.

Workstream/ Programme: South Essex Technical University		
Programme / Project Lead: Hatch Regeneris/Jim Sims		
Project Status (What is going well/not going well):		Description of RAG Status and Key Project Decisions/Direction/Action:
<p>The Executive Group continue to work on a mobilisation plan, to implementing the next phases of the project, focussing particularly on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder Communications and Engagement</li> <li>Developing the Operating Company</li> <li>Appointment of an HE Adviser</li> <li>Procurement of an HE Provider</li> <li>Securing Investment Finance from the Thames Freeport</li> </ul> <p>We have put in place the legal advisers needed to support the establishment of the OpCO and are about to appoint the HE Adviser needed to support us with the procurement of an HE provider.</p> <p>The tenth South Essex Technical University Partnership Board is planned to take place on 27 September 2022 and TEVVA Motors have agree to join the Partnership Board.</p>	Scope	GREEN
	Risk	GREEN
	Issue	GREEN
	Cost	AMBER
	Time	GREEN
	<p><b>Explanation of any Amber or Red RAG Statuses (including any decisions, direction or actions required):</b></p> <p><b>Amber Cost &amp; Time</b> – whilst we have now secured the funding to progress the implementation of the mobilisation plan, the business case points towards the need for the Technical University still needing public sector investment in the first two years of delivery to capitalise its start-up costs. Whilst early discussions with Thames Freeport (and Thurrock Council as the accountable body for the Freeport) about them providing this investment through retained business rates have been largely positive, the Thames Freeport is currently awaiting government approval of their Business Case.</p>	

<b>PROJECT / MILESTONE RAG STATUS KEY</b>	
<b>Will not be met</b>	<i>Project / milestone is definitely off track and does not yet have an effective recovery plan (recovery plan may involve re-planning milestones, scope, etc.). Significantly outside tolerances. One or more RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor action required.</i>
<b>Under Threat</b>	<i>Project / milestone is already off track, but has a recovery plan in place OR is in danger of going off track if current trends continue, therefore needs a remediation plan OR was on red and is still in recovery mode. Marginally outside project tolerances. No RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor oversight required.</i>
<b>On Track</b>	<i>Project being managed effectively. On track and confident of staying on track. Within project tolerances (budget, timescale, functionality).</i>
<b>Blue</b>	<i>Complete</i>

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<b>Report Date:</b>	September 2022	<b>Decisions Required:</b>	Request the joint committee:  1. To note the progress of the programme and to endorse the continued support to deliver the programme
<b>Programme Name:</b>	<b>ASELA Digital Programme</b>		
<b>ASELA Chief SRO:</b>	<b>Jonathan Stephenson</b>		
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b>	<b>Sharon Bayliss</b>		
<b>Lead Officer/Programme Manager:</b>	<b>Graham Brace</b>		

## Programme Summary

### Overall Programme Summary

The ambition for South Essex is that every household, business and community facility has access to affordable full fibre digital connectivity by 2025. Focused on four key themes.

**Full Fibre Coverage by 2025:** Through continued market stimulation and investment, leveraging the deployed full fibre network wherever possible.

**Expanding Mobile Coverage:** Engage with mobile operators to make South Essex attractive for investment, improve 4G coverage and capacity and expand 5G coverage, leveraging the investment in the full fibre network wherever possible.

**Improving Public Service:** Utilise our 200km of full fibre network for the benefit of the public sector across South Essex to drive down costs and open up innovation through shared infrastructure and shared digital services.

**Opening up Access for All:** Ensure digital inclusion across South Essex making 'decent' broadband not just available to all but affordable for all and ensuring everyone has the basic digital skills to make use of this connectivity.

### Programme Resources

There are no resource implications that are impacting the programme

### Unplanned Requests/Activities

There are no resource implications that are impacting the programme

Project Status (What is going well/not going well):	Description of RAG Status and Key Project Decisions/Direction/Action:	
<p><b>A Summary of recent focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>LFFN Digital Infrastructure Phase 1&amp;2:</b> The ASELA Digital Programme has rolled out more than 200km of full fibre across South Essex since August 2020. This has been funded by grants from DCMS and MHCLG totalling £6.9m, which were successfully secured by the Digital Programme. This new digital infrastructure links around 190 public sector sites including libraries, sheltered accommodations, schools, fire stations as well as community and village halls. In addition to this, we have joined up what were previously isolated areas across the region with fibre backhaul links. The full fibre infrastructure is available for use at no cost to the public sector irrespective of the bandwidths delivered for a period of 15 years. This is a significant achievement that differentiates us from grant funded projects across other regions.         </li> <li> <b>LFFN Phase 2 Village Halls and Community Centres:</b> The LFFN rollout will provide full fibre to circa 20 village halls and community centres across the region. The aim is to work with these community facilities with a view to strengthen their role within the communities potentially enable them as digital hubs. The initiative will be further developed and implemented by end of 2022.         </li> <li> <b>Taking of Service:</b> While the fibre has been laid, it remains dark until it is 'lit'. Taking a service and lighting the fibre is a key requirement of the grant funding and required to deliver the benefits to the public sector, and hence has been a main focus of the Digital Programme. Over 80 Thurrock deployed sites will be delivering service over the ASELA full fibre infrastructure by end of August '22. We are now working across the other authorities to progress a procurement activity that should provide a very cost effective and innovative solution to deliver internet speeds of 1 gigabit per second (Gbit/s) for both download and upload (ie symmetric) across the remainder of the connected public sector sites. It is anticipated that this solution should be in place by the early part of 2023.         </li> <li> <b>Market Engagement:</b> A key requirement from the grant funding was for it to stimulate private sector investment through both leveraging spare capacity and through profile raising of ASELA. Ongoing discussions and market engagement are in place with a view to stimulate investment particularly in 'not spot' areas. <b>This is now starting to deliver benefit with investments announced across the region by</b> </li> </ul>	Scope	GREEN
	Risk	GREEN
	Issue	GREEN
	Cost	GREEN
	Time	GREEN
	<p><b>Explanation of any Amber or Red RAG Statuses (including any decisions, direction or actions required):</b></p>	

Project Status (What is going well/not going well):	Description of RAG Status and Key Project Decisions/Direction/Action:
<p><b>Openreach, Digital Infrastructure (Be Fibre) and Netomnia. Further investment announcements are anticipated by the end of 2022.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Digital Inclusion Sheltered Housing:</b> Funding of 85K has been secured within Thurrock Council to leverage the full fibre deployment for residents Health and Wellbeing. Rollout is currently taking place and a trial of the technology and its uses is being conducted over the summer. Considerable interest has already been expressed in this project from Essex County Council and national Government and the Digital Programme is very keen to replicate this model across ASELA.</li> <li>• <b>ASELA Internet of Things (IoT) Network.</b> The ASELA Digital Programme has recently secured funding from Highways England to deliver an ASELA-wide IOT long range wide area network (LoRaWAN), that fully leverages the ASELA Digital Infrastructure and its connectivity into public sector buildings across the region, making it in ASELA’s view both attractive and innovative. Work on delivering this important project is due to commence in September 2022.</li> <li>• <b>ASELA Digital Infrastructure Expansion.</b> The ASELA Digital Programme has recently secured funding from Highways England to deliver a full fibre link between Brentwood and South Ockendon in order to complete a fully interconnected fibre infrastructure across the whole of the ASELA region.</li> <li>• <b>ASELA new developments and regeneration schemes:</b> The digital programme continues to advise and work closely with the ASELA Joint Planning Officers Group in contributing to the ASELA Housing Programme and working to ensure that in new developments the provision of telecom, full fibre and 4G/5G through early engagement with the market.</li> </ul>	

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PROJECT / MILESTONE RAG STATUS KEY	
<b>Will not be met</b>	Project / milestone is definitely off track and does not yet have an effective recovery plan (recovery plan may involve re-planning milestones, scope, etc.). Significantly outside tolerances. One or more RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor action required.
<b>Under Threat</b>	Project / milestone is already off track, but has a recovery plan in place OR is in danger of going off track if current trends continue, therefore needs a remediation plan OR was on red and is still in recovery mode. Marginally outside project tolerances. No RED Risks/Issues. Sponsor oversight required.
<b>On Track</b>	Project being managed effectively. On track and confident of staying on track. Within project tolerances (budget, timescale, functionality).
<b>Blue</b>	Complete

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<b>DATE: 1 September 2022</b>	<b>ITEM:</b>
<b>Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) Update</b>	
<b>Joint Committee Briefing Meeting</b>	
<b>Programme Name</b>	DIGITAL
<b>ASELA Chief SRO</b>	Jonathan Stephenson
<b>Programme Implementation Director</b>	Sharon Bayliss
<b>Lead Officer/PM</b>	Graham Brace

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ambition for South Essex is that every household, business and community facility, has access to affordable full fibre digital connectivity by 2025.

The digital programme is focused on four key themes.

**Full Fibre Coverage by 2025:** Through continued market stimulation and investment, leveraging the deployed full fibre network wherever possible.

**Expanding Mobile Coverage:** Engage with mobile operators to make South Essex attractive for investment, improve 4G coverage and capacity and expand 5G coverage, leveraging the investment in the full fibre network wherever possible.

**Improving Public Service:** Utilise our 200km of full fibre network for the benefit of the public sector across South Essex to drive down costs and open up innovation through shared infrastructure and shared digital services.

**Opening up Access for All:** Ensure digital inclusion across South Essex making 'decent' broadband not just available to all but affordable for all and ensuring everyone has the basic digital skills to make use of this connectivity.

This paper updates the committee on the emerging phases of the Digital Programme, its ambitions and progress to date.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**That the Joint Committee:**

- 1.1 Notes the progress of the Digital Programme and endorses continued support to deliver the programme.**

## 2. ASELA region – full fibre coverage:

2.1 Full fibre coverage across the region has increased significantly over the past 12 months, as shown in the table below, but more still needs to be done:

Area	Full Fibre coverage (%)		Percentage Increase
	July 2021	August 2022	
England	21.9	37.7	17.8
Essex	19.5	36.5	17.0
Basildon	27.6	44	16.4
Brentwood	37.2	55	17.8
Castle Point	2.3	4.5	2.2 (see 2.1.1)
Rochford	8.1	33.4	24.3
Southend-on-Sea	23.7	51.5	27.8 (see 2.1.2)
Thurrock	13.6	48.1	34.5

Source: [Think Broadband](#)

### Comparisons

Area	Full Fibre Coverage Comparison %
	August 2022
England	37.7
Essex	36.5
Suffolk	32.39
Norfolk	29.10
Hertfordshire	29.51
Kent	45.14
LB Havering	8.74

Source: [Think Broadband](#)

To Note:

- 2.1.1 *Castle Point – whilst Castle Point still has a very low level of FTTP which is being actively addressed 50% of Castle Point currently does benefit from Gigabit speeds delivered predominately by Virgin Media through the recent upgrade of their cable network.*
- 2.1.2 *Southend – The figure of 51.5% is accounted for through the ongoing investment of City Fibre & Vodafone which was secured by Southend in 2019*
- 2.2 Most areas have seen coverage move from below national average to above national average (c37.7%). Factors in achieving this has been increased market activity thanks to a raised profile for the area due to the ASELA Digital Programme. The full fibre network has directly stimulated investment in the likes of Ingatestone and is in the process of attracting investment to improve connectivity in Business Parks in Basildon. South Essex has generally

outperformed comparable areas, which have not seen anywhere near the level of uplift over this period. From market engagement the view is that a further significant uplift will occur over the next two years.

The ASELA Digital Programme has a target to achieve 100% full fibre coverage across the region by 2025 (Government target is 85% access to gigabit capable networks). The biggest issue to achieving this is likely to be in addressing 'not spots', where businesses and residents can't get a 'decent broadband connection', defined by Ofcom as 10 Mbit/s download speed 1 Mbit/s upload speed.

### **3 ASELA digital infrastructure**

- 3.1 The ASELA Digital Programme has rolled out more than 200km of full fibre across South Essex since August 2020. This has been funded by grants from DCMS and MHCLG totalling £6.9m, which were successfully secured by the Digital Programme. This new digital infrastructure links around 190 public sector sites including libraries, sheltered accommodations, schools, fire stations as well as community and village halls. In addition to this, we have joined up what were previously isolated areas across the region with fibre backhaul links. The full fibre infrastructure is available for use at no cost to the public sector irrespective of the bandwidths delivered for a period of 15 years. This is a significant achievement that differentiates us from grant funded projects across other regions.
- 3.2 The work has progressed to time and budget and significantly raised the profile of ASELA as a result of close working with DCMS and ASELA has received very positive feedback on the project rollout.
- 3.1 The ASELA Digital Programme has recently secured further grant funding from Highways England's Lower Thames Crossing project to connect the Brentwood area to the rest of the region.
- 3.2 A further bid for funding (500K) has recently been submitted to SELEP (outstanding DLUHC funding). The bid is focused on extending the current network to benefit additional community and public building sites as well as the potential of extending the network into Southend.

### **4 Taking service from the the fibre**

- 4.1 While the fibre has been laid, it remains 'dark' until it is 'lit', that is to say a service is taken from it. This is a key requirement of the grant funding and when real benefit will begin to be delivered to the public sector and hence has been a main drive of the Digital Programme.
  - The ASELA Digital Programme supported Thurrock Council's wide area network (WAN) re-procurement to make use of the deployed ASELA fibre

infrastructure to enable significantly increased bandwidths and significant cost savings. As of September 2022 over 80 Thurrock Council WAN sites (80% of the total) will be running over the ASELA digital fibre infrastructure.

- We are now working across the other authorities to progress a procurement activity that should provide a very cost effective and innovative solution to deliver internet speeds of 1 gigabit per second (Gbit/s) for both download and upload (ie symmetric) across the remainder of the connected public sector sites. It is anticipated that this solution should be in place by the early part of 2023.

## 5 Leveraging the improved public sector connectivity

5.1 The following activities are being progressed by the Digital Programme to ensure that having access to fibre is only the first stage in delivering a successful digital programme. The focus is now shifting to delivering outcomes that constitute real and tangible benefits to the public sector as a result of the ASELA Digital Infrastructure rollout:

- **Sheltered housing – wellbeing and digital skills**

The ASELA Digital Programme secured funding from Thurrock Council working with the Thurrock Sheltered Housing manager to leverage the full fibre now rolled out to all 29 Thurrock sheltered sites to address wellbeing and digital skills. A trial of the technology and its uses is being conducted over the summer. Considerable interest has already been expressed in this project from Essex County Council and national Government and the Digital Programme is very keen to replicate this model across ASELA.

- **Village halls and community centres – community hubs**

The ASELA digital infrastructure rollout will provide full fibre gigabit connectivity to around 20 village halls and community centres across the region. The digital programme plans to work with these community facilities with a view to strengthening their role within their communities and potentially enable them as community digital hubs. This initiative will be further developed and implemented by the end of 2022.

To note: (A Schedule of the Community Sites will be included for the Formal Meeting)

- **Creating a public sector network across ASELA**

The ASELA Digital Infrastructure will connect around 190 public sector sites across the region. The ASELA Digital Programme plans to explore how to offer public sector partners the opportunity to consider collectively how connectivity for the wider public sector can be delivered in the future and at reduced cost.

- **ASELA 'Internet of Things' (IOT) Network**

The ASELA Digital Programme has recently secured funding from Highways England to deliver an ASELA-wide IOT long range wide area network (LoRaWAN), that fully leverages the ASELA Digital Infrastructure and its connectivity into public sector buildings across the region, making it in



ASELA's view both attractive and innovative. Work on delivering this important project is due to commence in September 2022.

Delivery of an ASELA IOT LoRaWAN is likely to attract significant investment into the region.

The Network would enable ASELA to deploy cutting edge Smart City solutions and would also enable business, public sector, educational organisations and the public to explore, trial and implement Internet of Things (IoT) technology.

The Network and Infrastructure would provide a solid base for development and implementation of solutions for the public sector such as

- Smart street lighting management system
- Smart parking
- Ditch and gully water level monitoring
- Road temperature monitoring for gritting operations
- Footfall counting
- Building management systems
- Telecare/telehealth
- Housing and building management
- Air quality – environmental systems
- Asset Tracking
- Traffic Monitoring

The infrastructure will provide the foundation for a whole ecosystem that could transform the economy.

- Teaching school children and students about the technology, increasing interest in coding careers
- New entrepreneurs able to try out and demonstrate their ideas
- Creation of new businesses in the ASELA area based on innovation
- Developing innovation groups throughout the ASELA area to work on challenges set by the public sector

This project has the real potential to open up new market opportunities for local companies to develop new products and solutions across the ASELA area and beyond.

## **6 Market stimulation from ASELA digital infrastructure rollout**

6.1 The other key requirement from the digital infrastructure grant funding was for it to stimulate private sector investment and market activity through both leveraging spare fibre capacity and through a resulting raised profile of ASELA. As the infrastructure rollout concludes the Digital Programme has been ramping up market engagement with a view to stimulate investment particularly in 'not spot' areas. This work has included:

- **Delivery Partner MoU**

The Digital Programme continues to work closely with our fibre delivery partner Next Generation Access (NGA) on an MoU. This MoU which would see at least 25% of commercial revenues generated from selling access to spare capacity on the digital infrastructure being re-invested into digital-related initiatives and projects for the direct benefit of the public sector across the region and the local community. It is projected that the MOU will be completed during Autumn 2022.

- **'Not spot' identification**

The Digital Programme has been working to identify 'not spot' areas across the region, where coverage remains poor, and mapping these onto a Google maps overlay alongside the deployed fibre infrastructure and the third party interconnection points to the fibre. This model has now been produced and will be kept up to date as data changes.

- **Third party private investment**

The Digital Programme has been talking with a number of prospective fibre connectivity providers about leveraging the fibre roll-out to support commercial business cases to invest in areas of poor fibre coverage. This has involved:

- Sharing not spot data and data on fibre infrastructure roll-out
- Promoting ASELA as a good place for fibre investment
- Exploring ways of stimulating investment in business parks and new developments.

As a result of this engagement a number of fibre providers are now actively investing within the region, this includes the following, who have made public announcements

Openreach – Grays and Purfleet, Wickford

Digital Infrastructure (Be Fibre) – Brentwood and Ingatestone

Netomnia – Grays/Stanford Le Hope & Purfleet

Through these engagements we are anticipating further announcements regarding further investment by the end of 2022.

- **Business engagement:**

Access to high speed and reliable broadband is increasingly essential to do business, and the Digital Programme continues to engage with the business community to:

- Understand and promote issues and challenges around digital connectivity (fixed and mobile)
- Identify 'not spot' areas for business across ASELA
- Leverage investment into business parks from the deployed digital infrastructure.

## **7 Digital inclusion**

- 7.1 This is one of the key workstreams for the Digital Programme and needs to be addressed so the region can fully realise the benefits that could be achieved through a 100% full fibre coverage. This covers tackling:
- Not spots – Inability to obtain a ‘decent broadband connection through un-availability.  
Inability to afford a decent broadband connection – working with public and private sectors to deliver cheaper packages an issue which is now receiving higher profile due to the current cost of living situation. ASELA’s Digital Programme Team are already actively involved in engaging with the market to identify ways in which social broadband tariffs can be delivered either through social value or ASELA playing a proactive role in wider national initiatives
  - Inability to make full use of a broadband connection through lack of digital skills.

## **8 Mobile Coverage**

- 8.1 Recognising the importance of improving mobile coverage across ASELA the Digital Programme has continued to engage with the Mobile Operators with a view to promoting South Essex and attracting investment. This has already resulted in additional sites being deployed and 5G investment being progressed across certain areas of the Region (Grays, Southend, Basildon).
- 8.2 The Digital Programme is actively working with its ASELA Partners to determine how public sector assets (buildings/land) can be an enabler in improving coverage (access to such sites under standard licence/commercial terms).
- 8.3 The Digital Programme is currently focused on more rural areas of the region with a view to addressing mobile coverage and is working closely with Superfast Essex in progressing a number of initiatives.

## **9 ASELA new developments and regeneration schemes**

- 9.1 The Digital Programme continues to advise and work closely with the ASELA Planning Board and have contributed to the ASELA Housing Strategy report and working to ensure that in new developments the provision of telecom ducting, full fibre provision and accommodation for 4G/5G technology, through early engagement with the market.

## **10 Engagement with DCMS and Superfast Essex**

- 10.1 The ASELA Digital Programme continues to engage with both DCMS and Superfast Essex and will play a key enabling role in the Government funded Gigabit Project, which is looking to address the final 20% of properties who will not benefit from commercial investment but will require government intervention to meet broadband availability targets.





<b>DATE 1 September 2022</b>	<b>ITEM: 10</b>
<b>ASELA Joint Committee</b>	
<b>ASELA Communications update</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Adrian Wardle	
<b>Programme Implementation Director:</b> Karen Wheeler	
<b>Accountable Programme SRO:</b> Lyn Carpenter	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on the communications work done in support of ASELA and, in particular, the five key programmes since the committee last met in July.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**That the Joint Committee:**

#### 1.1 Notes the update provided in this report.

### 2. Introduction and background

2.1 ASELA has continued to enjoy a good profile during the last period through external recognition and has increased its social media following. As the five programmes move increasingly into delivery mode during the autumn, the number of opportunities for positive promotion and engagement will increase.

2.2 Widening the group of advocates for ASELA and its programmes will be an important focus in the coming months – particularly in the member and MP circles and with the wider business community across South Essex, working with colleagues in Opportunity South Essex.

2.3 We will look for opportunities to build the profile of ASELA, its programme of work and its achievements through conferences and speaking opportunities.

### 3. Content update

3.1 Content updates we have produced and shared in this period are set out below:

- [South Essex green and blue plan wins international architecture award](#)
- Opening of the South Essex stretch of the England Coast Path
- Contract opportunities for South Essex businesses with Lower Thames Crossing project

3.2 We have issued one further enewsletter to members across all authorities, MPs, businesses and wider stakeholders.

#### 4. Channels update

4.1 The following metrics help understand interest and engagement in our work. Please be aware that we were in pre-election period for much of this time.

<i>Channel</i>	<i>Last 3 months</i>	<i>+/-</i>
LinkedIn	45 new followers 394 followers	+10%
Twitter	9 impressions a day 56 followers	+13% +10%
Website	915 users 1,300 sessions	-50% -50%

#### 5. Forthcoming events

5.1 The following events and project milestones provide proactive communication opportunities:

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Event/milestone</i>	<i>Date</i>
Digital Connectivity	LTC funding bid result press release Taking of service procurement launch Sheltered accommodation pilot results Taking of service procurement – award Public and community sites online (develop testimony stories)	Sept '22 Sept '22 Autumn '22 December '22 Spring '23
SEEPARK	Creative and cultural sector engagement	October '22
South Essex Technical University	Business supporter group recruitment Operating company formation HE provider procurement Business engagement	Autumn '22 October '22 Sept-Dec '22 Autumn '22
Infrastructure and Housing	Joint Strategic Framework targeted engagement	Autumn '22

Programme-wide opportunities	ASELA Joint Committee MP engagement	22 September Autumn 2022

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