

APPENDIX TWO



A summary of responses to Cheshire East Council's

Digital Inclusion Partnership Strategy Consultation

DRAFT

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Report produced on 20th January 2023 by the Research and Consultation Team, Cheshire East Council, Email RandC@cheshireeast.gov.uk for further information.

Executive summary and conclusions

During November-January 2022/3 Cheshire East Council undertook a consultation on its Draft Digital Inclusion Partnership Strategy. In total 136 responses were received.

Encouragingly, the majority of respondents (over 60%) rated the vision and ideas within the delivery plan as very good or good. The majority of respondents also agreed (either strongly or tend to) that the priorities set out with the strategy are the right areas for Cheshire East Council to focus on.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) described themselves as digitally enabled, 7% would consider themselves digitally averse and 8% would consider themselves digitally excluded. Those that were digital enabled provided useful comments considering others who may not be as enabled as themselves. Even so it will be important going forward to take pro-active steps in engaging and including those who would consider themselves digitally excluded or averse in the partnership / ongoing planning work.

Respondents felt that the groups as described with the strategy (digitally enabled, averse, excluded) could be expanded to include more sub-groups. In particular, expand or add on groups which include / specifically mention those who are digitally aware but inexperienced and those digitally disadvantaged due to for example age, disability, connectivity, or cost.

The comments provided by respondents gave some useful suggestions for improvement, for example, respondents felt that further consideration was needed, for those who are more likely to have difficulties in accessing or using digital devices. Specific reference was made to those who are elderly, those with disabilities, those with financial constraints and those in rural areas. Respondents also felt it was important to consider those who do not necessarily want to be digitally included and prefer to use other more traditional methods.

The support required to help people become more digitally included, consisted of training courses on computer use, mobile phone use, safety & security and social media. Information on the best hardware / software & broadband package depending on needs, and support with the cost and upgrades associated was also suggested. Respondents felt that on-going, one-to-one support was needed for certain individuals and that support should be provided in local areas or within a resident's own home.

It is recommended that the comments are reviewed, and the strategy updated where possible to cover any key points made during the consultation. The findings should also be kept in mind for any future detailed plans made in relation to the strategy.

Introduction

Purpose of the consultation

During November-January 2022/3 Cheshire East Council undertook a consultation on its Draft Digital Inclusion Partnership Strategy. The strategy sets out how we will try and help everyone in Cheshire East to feel more digitally included.

Consultation methodology and number of responses

The consultation was held online with paper versions being available on request, hard copies of the consultation were also provided at our Libraries. It was promoted to:

- The general public
- Cheshire East Digital Influence Panel
- Town and Parish Councils
- Business' in Cheshire East

In total, 163 responses were received.

A breakdown of demographics can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Section 1 – The Vision

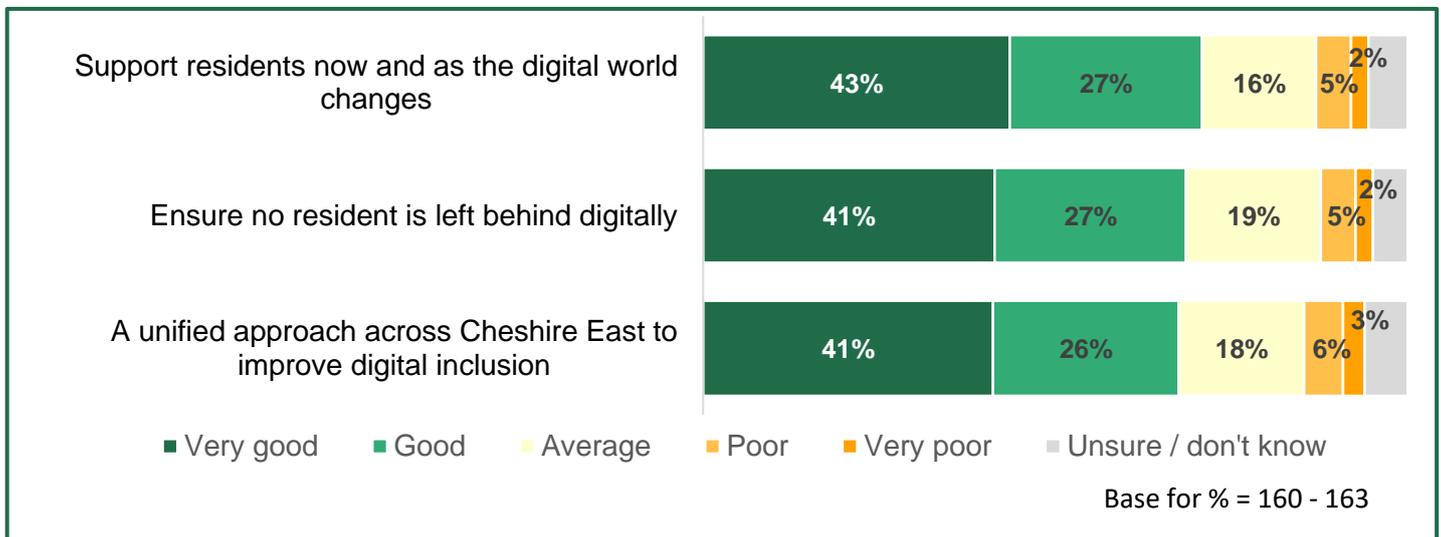
The majority of respondents rated each of the statements within the vision as good or very good.

The draft strategy included a vision for digital inclusion, the vision was represented by three statements as follows:

- We want to ensure that no resident is left behind digitally, and all Cheshire East residents can access the digital skills, technology and services they need and want in the right way for them.
- We want to support residents now and in the future as the world of digital continues to evolve.
- We want to have a unified approach across Cheshire East, joining up the great work that is and will be undertaken to tackle digital exclusion, and create positive, real and sustained change for our community.

Respondents were asked to rate each statement of the vision from very good to very poor. The majority of respondents (67-70%) rated each of the statements as good or very good. Figure 1 below shows the full breakdown of results.

Figure 1: Ratings received for each of the three statements within the vision



Respondents were also asked if they had any comments on the vision, 50 respondents left a comment. Comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Consideration of difficulties due to age / for those with a disability or long-term limiting illness, 11 mentions
- Requires more information on how the vision will be achieved, 10 mentions
- Consideration for those who do not want to access digital information, 10 mentions
- Consideration of those not digitally connected inc. consideration for rural areas and financial, constraints, 9 mentions
- Vision unclear / vague, 4 mentions
- Other comments, 6 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Comments received on the vision		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Consideration of difficulties due to age / for those with a disability or long-term limiting illness	<p>It is heavily divided by age range; older people do not trust digital use especially regarding finance. Continuous support for older people, especially those living alone, is needed so they are able to keep up do date with changing technology.</p> <p>Does not seem to say much about children and young people.</p> <p>Does not address the needs of those who cannot use the internet due to illness or disability – those with dementia for example may have once been able to use the internet and now struggle.</p>	11
Requires more information on how the vision will be achieved	<p>Statements are good however there is no information on how they can be achieved. Realistically is it achievable, would it be able to deliver especially in terms of a unified approach, how will it be funded, who will take responsibility for maintaining, updating and delivery?</p>	10
Consideration for those who do not want to access digital information	<p>Does not take account of those who do not wish to become digitally included and prefer alternative / more traditional methods of service and / or communication. Some people prefer to communicate face-to-face or prefer to pick up the phone and speak to a person. These people need to be considered and their wishes respected.</p>	10
Consideration of those not digitally connected inc. consideration for rural areas and financial constraints	<p>Misses a strategy to reach and engage with people not currently digitally connected, some people do not have the capabilities for using online services, even though they are given support.</p> <p>Full connectivity needed across the borough including rural areas.</p> <p>Necessary to retain access to library services / computer suites for those people who cannot afford a computer and the associated costs. Need to also focus on the inclusion of own staff, many in the lowest pay bands are digitally disadvantaged and cannot access discounts.</p> <p>Digital should only be part of the delivery method, non-digital fall back is also good insurance planning, it is important that no one is left out, for some people digital is excluding rather than inclusive.</p>	9
Vision unclear / vague	<p>The statements are a little vague and 'jargony'. The word 'digital' can be confusing, examples of what is meant would be good. The first and third statements in particular are vague, statement three is wordy and it is not clear whether the change is in relation to digital exclusion or something else.</p>	4
Other comments	<p>Other comments provided include a question on whether this is something Cheshire East should be taking on, process and policy being streamlined across organisations, access being simple, resident also taking some personal responsibility for their skills and general negative comments.</p>	6

Section 2 – Our residents

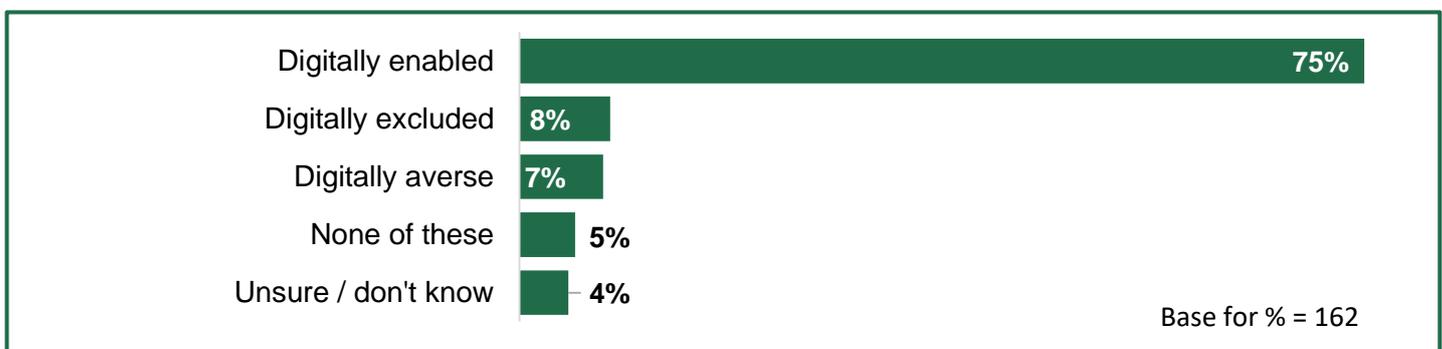
The majority of respondents felt they fell under the ‘digitally enabled’ group in terms of digital inclusion

The draft strategy identified three groups that residents fell into for digital inclusion as identified by pre-engagement exercises:

- **Digitally Averse:** Residents in this group told us that they do not wish to use digital methods and are keen not to be pressured into using digital methods for a variety of reasons.
- **Digitally Excluded:** Residents in this group told us that they want to use digital methods but there are several barriers in the way to them achieving this.
- **Digitally Enabled:** Our digitally included residents felt confident and able to use the internet. They often used it for shopping online, searching for information and keeping in touch with others, alongside accessing the services they need.

Respondents were asked which type of resident in terms of digital inclusion they felt they fell under. The majority of respondents (75%) would consider themselves as digitally enabled. 7% would consider themselves digitally averse and 8% would consider themselves digitally excluded.

Figure 2: Type of respondent in terms of digital inclusion



Respondents were asked to comment if they felt there was anything missing from the groups, 49 respondents left a comment. The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Consider those digitally disadvantaged, 19 mentions
- Consider those digitally aware but Inexperienced, 13 mentions
- Consider expansion of the current categories generally, 11 mentions
- Other comments, 7 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 2.

Respondents were also asked what support, if any, did they feel they would need to be more digitally included, 74 respondents left a comment. The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Training / more information, 18 mentions
- None needed, 16 mentions
- Support with the cost of equipment, upgrades or broadband, 13 mentions
- Access to better / faster internet speeds or public Wi-Fi, 12 mentions
- One to one support / mentoring from another individual, 10 mentions
- Non-digital options of contact and support, 7 mentions
- Other comments, 4 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Comments received on the resident groups for digital inclusion		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Consider those digitally disadvantaged	Those who struggle to access digital methods due to illness or disability. The elderly, those living alone or those on low incomes. Those in areas with low internet speeds and poor connectivity.	19
Consider those digitally aware but Inexperienced	Those who are aware and are able to use digital technology to a degree but are not totally confident in its use or up to date with changes in the digital word	13
Consider expansion of the current categories generally	All of the categories could be expanded – there is a middle ground to all of these options. Digitally enabled in particular could have sub-sections regarding competency, digitally excluded could be explained better. Consider those who do not want to use it or only use it for certain topics and prefer traditional methods of contact and more personal interactions	11
Other comments	Other comments provided include a comment on the wording being unclear, those who feel the groups cover all types and comments stating they support people who fall into all the groups.	7

Table 3: Comments received on the support required to become digitally included		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Training / more information	Easy access to training, refresher computer/internet courses, more confidence in use and digital protection / internet security. A better understanding of how social media works, training in mobile use, more information about help offered, simpler instructions.	18
None needed	None or none on a personal level but aware of others who would need support	16
Support with the cost of equipment, upgrades or broadband	Need a level playing field for all residents despite finances, support also for those who do not necessarily qualify for benefits. A low-cost broadband package for every resident, packages in rural areas are limited and costly. Financial support to help with ongoing internet provision Financial support for equipment, heavily discounted computers should be available to all people in full time education who live in Cheshire East. Discounts for upgrades to the latest software and hardware - certain applications no longer work on out of date software / hardware	13
Access to better / faster internet speeds or public Wi-Fi	Better connectivity, faster / fibre broadband especially in rural areas – option to also keep landline. Option to connect to public Wi-Fi.	12

Table 3: Comments received on the support required to become digitally included		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
One to one support / mentoring from another individual	<p>A mentor to explain why digital technology would be of benefit - get put off by salespersons interested in money.</p> <p>Encourage people to help others, would need ongoing one-to-one assistance from another individual when needing to access things online, need help to not feel overwhelmed or afraid.</p> <p>Would like to be able to speak to someone not from a chat box thing that pops up.</p>	10
Non-digital options of contact and support	<p>More opportunity to have face to face contact with the council or be able to speak with someone easily on the phone, especially if digital methods do not solve the issue or query. Less reliance on digital solutions and more support in the local area in public locations such as libraries</p> <p>Would like to have choice and not forced to go online</p>	7
Other comments	<p>Services that are easy to access, more agile / targeted framework of strategies that are properly resourced, Cheshire East website needs updating the Live Well site is complicated, change behaviour of trolling.</p>	4

Section 3 – The priorities

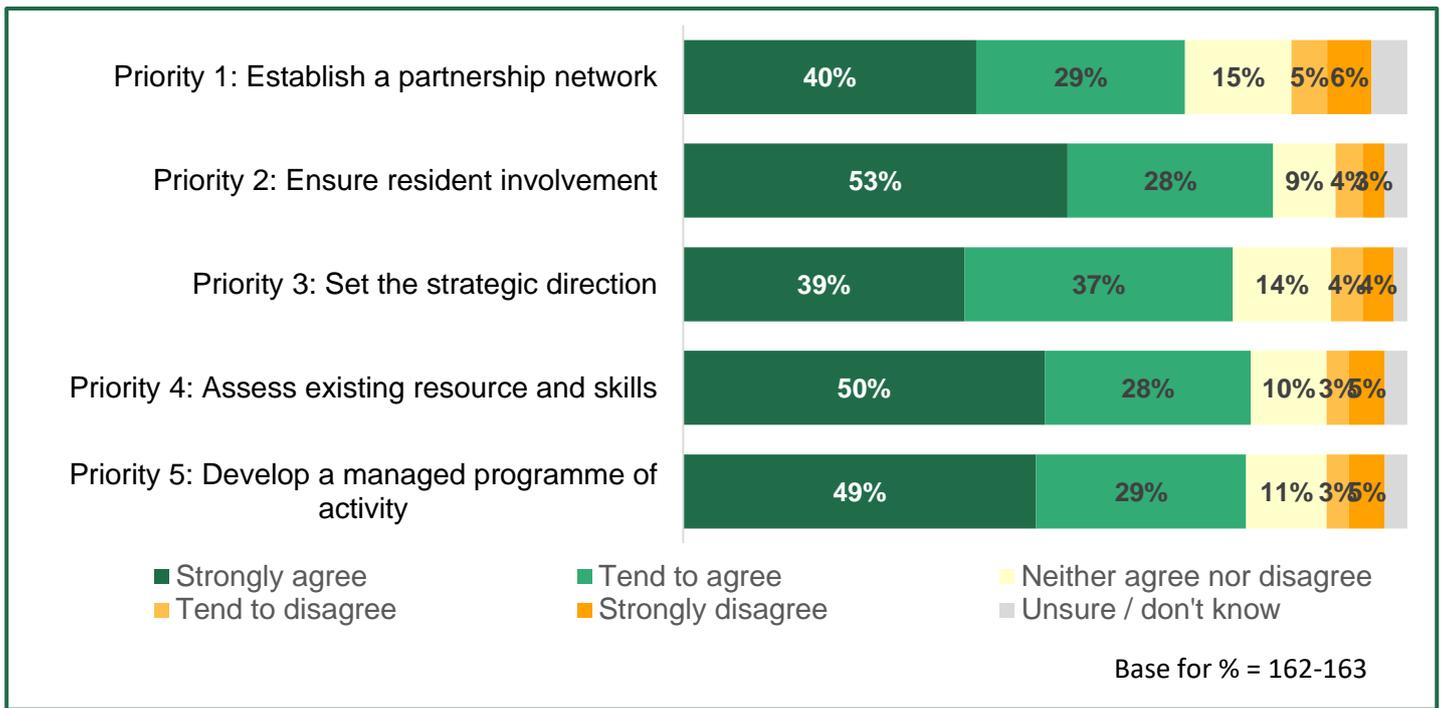
The majority of respondents agreed that the priorities were the right areas to focus on as part of the Digital Inclusion Partnership Strategy

Five initial priorities were established as part of the draft strategy. These were:

- **Priority 1: Establish a Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership network:** We will establish a broader digital inclusion network to strengthen our partnership and ensure more work is joined-up. This will lead to more focused and impactful outcomes for our residents
- **Priority 2: Open up the opportunity for resident involvement:** We will ensure that the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership includes resident voices, allowing for a greater understanding of any gaps in support provision and with gaining ideas on how we can tackle digital exclusion.
- **Priority 3: Set the strategic direction for digital inclusion activity:** We will ensure that any substantial negative impact digital exclusion has for residents directly informs the strategic direction for activity. Examples include provision of offline communication and services, access to digital tools, ensuring everyone has the right skills and feeling of safety online.
- **Priority 4: Assess existing resource and skills:** Complete a mapping exercise to assess the existing resource and skills available for aiding digital inclusion. This will help us gain a clear understanding of what we have now, how to maximise their impact and where the gaps are (also known as asset mapping).
- **Priority 5: Develop a managed programme of activity:** The Digital Inclusion Strategy will be achieved through a managed programme of activity in accordance with the above four priorities.

Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed that the priorities are the right areas to focus on as part of the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership Strategy. The majority of respondents agreed with Priority 2: Ensure resident involvement, receiving the highest agreement with 81% stating either strongly or tend agree. Priority 1: Establish a partnership network, received the lowest agreement with 69% stating either strongly or tend to agree as Figure 3 shows.

Figure 3: Agreement / disagreement with the five priorities



Respondents were asked to comment if they felt there was anything missing from the priorities, 40 respondents left a comment. The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- More support for those who struggle to access digital methods, 11 mentions
- Specific comment on the priorities, 8 mentions
- Require more information on how the priorities will be achieved / assessed, 6 mentions
- Bear in mind those who do not want to be digitally included, 5 mentions
- Priority statements unclear / vague, 4 mentions
- Other comments, 7 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 4.

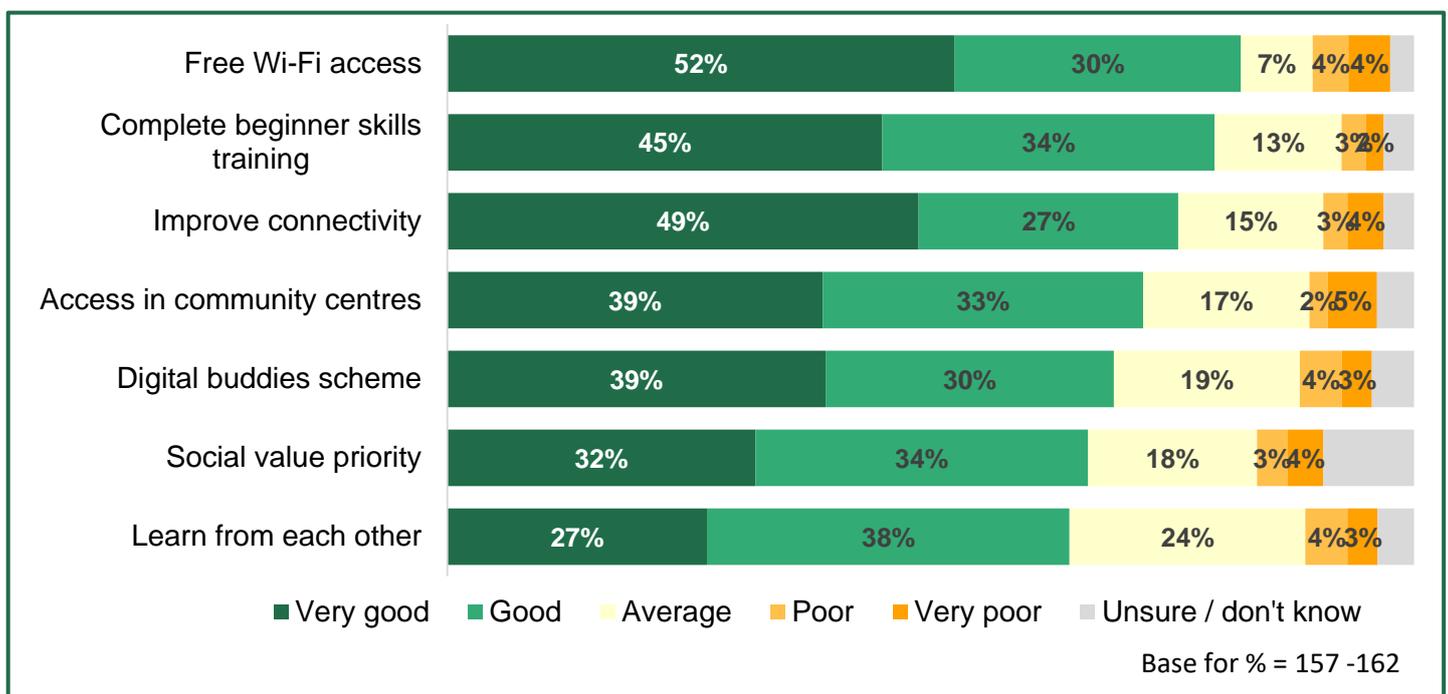
Table 4: Comments received on the priorities		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
More support for those who struggle to access digital methods	<p>Need continuous support for the elderly, people living alone and those with disabilities. More should be included on supporting those that cannot afford digital methods - there are socio-economic differences that need to be considered. With everything going online every household should have technology available to them. Need more user centred design of services to ensure they work for everyone. Offer basic advice e.g., which tablet is best, which is the right broadband plan. Consider connectivity / broadband needs, can Cheshire East not offer a basic broadband package with one of the networks?</p> <p>If people can't access digital methods, consider sending forms/info by post and make sure that the essential backup telephone lines are properly staffed throughout the day. Face to face communication is still important. Ensure all off-line communications are monitored, properly assessed against a defined expectation, and maintained. If no one is monitoring these, holes in services will appear.</p>	11
Specific comment on the priorities	<p>Priority 1: Don't believe much progress can be made here, the NHS and VCFSE's are poorly connected digitally.</p> <p>Priority 2: Member representatives will be largely residents of Cheshire East anyway, need representatives that are digitally averse and/or digitally excluded, residents should have no affiliation to digital industries or interests to be able review true digital inclusion.</p> <p>Consider community networks for residents in community venues - a strategic group may be too intimidating. Somewhere where people could get together and ask questions and access support, this encourages the community to take responsibility for the changes and the running of the agenda.</p> <p>Priority 4: Joining up is very important.</p> <p>Add Priority 6: Support those who have decided for any reason not to use computers inc. full telephone support</p> <p>General: Re-order the priorities to Priority 2, Priority 3, Priority 4, Priority 1, then Priority 5.</p>	8
Require more information on how the priorities will be achieved / assessed	No mention of where funding will come from or what resources will be put in place to support its delivery. Need to continuously monitor, measure and evaluate best practice and progress.	6
Bear in mind those who do not want to be digitally included	Missing those who don't want to be involved with the digital age, don't exclude those who don't want to be digitally included.	5
Priority statements unclear / vague	The priority statements are not very clear, they are very vague and woolly could be written in more plain English - priority 3 and 5 in particular.	4
Other comments	Other comments provided include a comment on Airband - installing poles without prior consultation in areas where it is not required, ensuring Cheshire East let users lead, there is nothing missing and general negative comments.	7

Section 4 – The delivery plan

The majority of respondents rated the actions within the delivery plan as good or very good

The strategy also included a list of actions as part of an initial delivery plan. Respondents were asked how they would rate the ideas within the delivery plan from very good to very poor. The majority of respondent stated the actions as good or very good with 'Free Wi-Fi access' receiving the highest rating, 82% rated this action as good or very good. 'Learn from each other' received the lowest rating, 65% rated this action as good or very good, 24% rated this action as average.

Figure 4: Ratings received for each of the ideas within the delivery plan



Respondents were asked to comment if they felt there was any actions missing from the delivery plan, 24 respondents left a comment. The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- Comment on complete beginner skills training, 7 mentions
- Support with equipment, improving connectivity and free WI-FI, 6 mentions
- Comment on social value, 3 mentions
- Comment on access in local community centres, 2 mentions
- Other comments, 7 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 5.

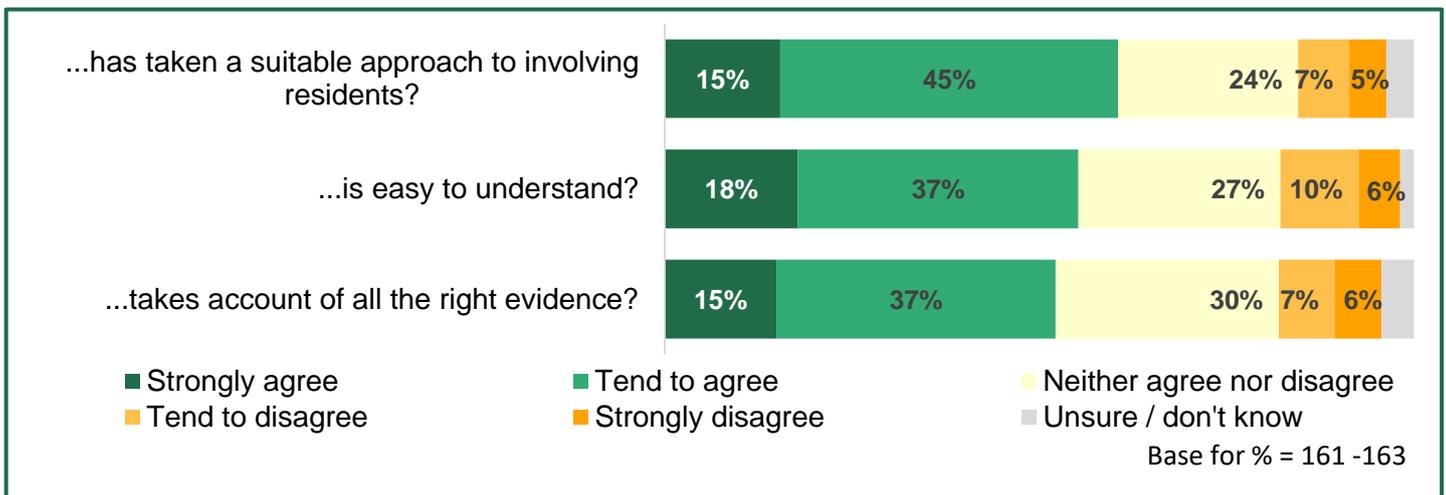
Table 5: Comments received on the delivery plan		
Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
Comment on complete beginner skills training	<p>The very beginning is showing people the ways their lives would be improved if they embraced digital technology. Education activity for digitally adverse groups - understanding root causes and identify mitigation/management measures. Those delivering schemes need to understand the fear people have, go at the learner's pace and not use jargon. Emphasise the useful task e.g., emailing friends & family being able to amend text and use spell check, send without trip to post box etc rather than learning digital skills / computing. Include cyber security in the training in a way that builds confidence. Consider clubs for people to build social connections - the fear of losing face-to-face contact could be something that puts some people off.</p> <p>Delivery needs to be within accessible locations and run by organisations that people trust. The elderly and infirm will need constant support.</p>	7
Support with equipment, improving connectivity and free WI-FI	<p>Provide grants or loans to assist residents with the cost of technology devices, consider the provision of enabled hardware for the digitally adverse.</p> <p>Connecting to fibre or broadband can be expensive especially for those in rural areas. Cheshire East could offer a cost effective, no frills, budget broadband service. The plan mentions free Wi-Fi for social housing residents but nothing for elderly residents in their own private housing.</p>	6
Comment on social value	<p>Consider community champions working in partnership with commercial companies who have expertise and could support the plan as part of their social value responsibility.</p> <p>Social value tends to become another box tick for potential suppliers and will tend to put off some that can add value. A bit much to expect partners to go over and above contracts given the financial climate.</p>	3
Comment on access in local community centres	<p>Access and support in own homes is important, provision in community centres will not help those reluctant to learn or those most in need that are possibly home bound.</p> <p>Local community centres could combine access to computers with social interaction.</p>	2
Other comments	<p>Other comments provided include a comment on making the Cheshire East online offering easier to engage with, involving organisations such as W3A, investment rather than relying on charities and volunteers, the challenges for those with financial constraints or the elderly and general positive or negative comments.</p>	7

Section 5 – The strategy overall / further comments

Over one half of respondents agreed that the strategy document has taken a suitable approach to involving residents, is easy to understand and takes account of the right evidence.

Finally, respondents were asked a set of questions about the strategy overall whether they felt it was easy to understand, has taken a suitable approach to involving residents and whether it takes account of all the right evidence. The majority of respondents (60%) agreed (either strongly or tend to) that the document has taken a suitable approach in involving residents. Over 50% agreed that it is easy to understand (55%) and takes account of all the right evidence (52%) as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Agreement / disagreement with aspects of the draft strategy overall



Respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make on the draft strategy, 39 respondents left a comment on the online survey and one response was provided by email. The comments received have been coded into themes as follows:

- More support / consideration for those who struggle to access digital methods, 14 mentions
- Need for training and information on the benefits of digital use, 7 mentions
- Strategy is vague, unclear or difficult to understand, 6 mentions
- Expand partnerships, 4 mentions
- Support with broadband / hardware, 3 mentions
- Other comments, 5 mentions

Please note that some respondents will have referred to more than one theme therefore total mentions won't add up to the total number of respondents who left a comment. The summary of the comments received by each theme is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Summary of the comments received on the strategy overall

Theme	Summary of comments received	Number of mentions
More support / consideration for those who struggle to access digital methods	<p>Digital aversion needs more consideration. Need fair access to services for those who don't want to be digitally included. Face to face contact and telephone is still needed.</p> <p>Concentration and communication is difficult for some people with certain disabilities. Poor eyesight, weak hearing, all happen with age and make using technology more difficult. Need to cater to those who will never be able to use digital devices due their disability. Would like to see much stronger reference to disabled people throughout the strategy.</p> <p>Older people do not trust digital technology, are not as confident with its use or are not interested. Elderly residents still living in their own private housing can have greater social isolation and no option of 'free' Wi-Fi. The digital world can lead to social isolation. Need volunteers to help the older generation. Many older people will need to continue to have access to services in a non-digital format no matter how much support or training is provided.</p> <p>Don't forget digitally excluded staff.</p>	14
Need for training and information on the benefits of digital use	<p>A register of all those organisations who are involved in any sort of computer training should be compiled. Offer the basics only, spend investment on making sure everyone is aware of the offer.</p> <p>Specific action taken to help vulnerable people to understand how to protect themselves from scams. There is a need for people to be able to use a computer and hopefully use them sensibly and safely, consider how you can bring the digital rejecters on board. Emphasise the benefits of requesting repeat NHS prescriptions online access to NHS information sites, offer incentives for using digital services.</p>	7
Strategy is vague, unclear or difficult to understand	<p>Unclear as to what is being strategised about apart from fast broadband and various channels for access to council services. Easy to understand but uses far too many words - make things available in plain English, strategy feels like it's full of jargon and has little substance. Needs to be more interactive, using the aid of video and verbalised rather than pages of written content. The Consultation material should be offered in more accessible formats.</p> <p>Unclear on how you'll know what difference you've made, needs measures /timeframes.</p> <p>The figures for the non-enabled hide areas/groups that need support the most.</p>	6
Expand partnerships	<p>Expand VSFSE in the relevant section. Get involved with lots of local groups. Engage with the Cheshire disabled people's panel. Don't create complex partnerships that fail to deliver</p>	4
Support with broadband / hardware	<p>Need the finance to include everyone from the outset to avoid another disadvantaged population.</p> <p>All those in full time education should have access to heavily discounted computers. All business should have fibre broadband. Make converting to digital lines easier / cheaper.</p>	3
Other comments	<p>Other comments provided include a comment on making it easier to find documents on the Cheshire East website / improve the search facility, general positive comments and general negative comments.</p>	5

Appendix 1 – Demographic breakdowns

A number of demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey to ensure there was a wide range of views from across different characteristics. All of the questions were optional and therefore won't add up to the total number of responses received.

Table 7.1: Number of survey respondents by representation

Category	Count	Percent
As a Cheshire East resident	119	73%
Cheshire East staff member / employee	14	9%
As an elected Cheshire East Ward Councillor, or Town/Parish Councillor / Clerk	11	7%
On behalf of a group, organisation or club	7	< 5%
On behalf of a local business	7	< 5%
As a Cheshire East resident on behalf of someone else	<5	< 5%
Other	<5	< 5%
Grand Total	162	100%

Table 7.2: Number of survey respondents by gender

Category	Count	Percent
Male	65	52%
Female	74	46%
Prefer not to say	< 5	< 5%
Grand Total	142	100%

Table 7.3: Number of survey respondents by age group

Category	Count	Percent
16-24	< 5	< 5%
25-34	< 5	< 5%
35-44	14	10%
45-54	19	13%
55-64	27	19%
65-74	46	32%
75-84	28	19%
85 and over	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	5	< 5%
Grand Total	144	100%

Table 7.4: Number of survey respondents by ethnic origin

Category	Count	Percent
White British / English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / Irish	137	96%
Any other White background	< 5	< 5%
Prefer not to say	< 5	< 5%
Grand Total	142	100%

Table 7.5: Number of survey respondents by religious belief

Category	Count	Percent
Christian	79	57%
Buddhist	< 5	< 5%
Other religious belief	6	< 5%
None	41	29%
Prefer not to say	9	6%
Grand Total	138	100%

Table 7.6: Number of survey respondents by limited activity due to health problem / disability

Category	Count	Percent
Yes	35	24%
No	104	72%
Prefer not to say	5	< 5%
Grand Total	126	100%