

Digital Business Ecosystems, Presentation by Paul Nash of Shropshire County Council, West Midlands Region on behalf of Birmingham City University.

Achievements and Future Perspectives.

Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues may I thank you for this opportunity to present to you on behalf of the West Midlands Region

My Role

My name is Paul Nash. I am a Local Government Officer with Shropshire County Council. I sit on the Regional European Rural Group, the Regional Research, Development and Innovation group, I am a member of the Regional ICT Operational Group and a member of the National Digital Inclusion Network.

DBE within the West Midlands

Sector Focussed

Within the West Midlands Region there has been a sector focus for the development of the Digital Business Ecosystem, ICT companies have successfully developed products which can be used by SMEs. Successful projects with SMEs such as Redenet with their customer relationship management suite and Inrax with their easy to access and cost effective financial and customer management suite show how effective the DBE can be in creating solutions and establishing links.

Knowledge Economy and Innovation

Supply chain innovation and added value

It is through the enabling technologies such as DBE that we can appreciate the importance of recognising that the opportunities for innovation are no longer solely focussed on the one big idea, important though that is. Because we can now pass codified knowledge along a horizontal supply chain, we can add value at a number of points along the way. Through ICT, we can locate those points wherever the benefit is greatest, not only where it is geographically convenient. The importance of location gives way to the importance of greatest value.

Vertical Disintegration

The vertical disintegration of traditional value chains means that our SMEs can be more specialised, can focus on key skills and abilities but in order to achieve this they need the right tools.

Role of DBE as a collaboration tool

The DBE has a role, moving forwards, as a cross sector enabler linking those points of added value and creating the flexibility to interchange contributors and participants as needs must.

Role of Public Sector

The public Sector in the UK faces a number of challenges

How to provide more for less

Providing quality services (more for less)

The search for good governance (openness and transparency)

Top Down v Bottom Up

In many ways service delivery is top down, driven by revenue recovery. In truth the highest demand, especially in rural areas such as Shropshire, is for local services. These are de-centralised, delivered by multiple local agencies, they are complex and small scale representing higher risk.

Links with Third Sector

What we see is a central Government drive for close engagement with the community and voluntary sector as a route to local service delivery. In ICT terms what we find is:

Absence of shared common standards (not an absence of standards)

Absence of a basis for shared trust

Leading to reduced opportunities for innovation

Digital Ecosystem

Opportunity, open source, open standards, controlled environment.

Big Front Office

What we might wish to explore is a total re-engineering of the front and back office which sees a smaller, more efficient back office and a larger, better front office which in turn can be distributed to the level of local delivery. In Shropshire we are tackling the issues of local, cross sector delivery of services which address many of the difficulties of working in sparsely populated rural areas.

Local Service Delivery

This provides us with the opportunity to create services which balance transparency with privacy, simplicity and complexity, flexibility and continuity and to provide choice in terms of channels, location and provider. The Digital Ecosystem provides us with an opportunity to do just that and, moving forwards, provides us with an environment for innovation in the public as well as in the private sector.

Birmingham City University is moving forwards with the DBE and is about to start collaborations with the Welsh Assembly as part of the regeneration of Anglesey. They have just announced a project with Emnet and Nottingham City.

On behalf of Shropshire County Council and Birmingham City University thank you for listening.