

From the Office of the Minister
Diane Dodds MLA



Mr John Kelpie
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Your Ref: TJ/C297/20

5 November 2020

Dear John,

Derry City and Strabane District Council Motion – ‘Digital Hubs’

Thank you for your correspondence dated 9th October 2020, addressed to the First Minister and deputy First Minister, regarding the development of ‘Digital Hubs’ within urban and rural population centres. This correspondence eventually made its way to my Department for a response, hence the delay.

You have reported that the motion for this proposal was passed at a Council meeting on 24th September. As such, it is unclear whether this motion relates to the period of the current Covid-19 pandemic, or if this is a longer term proposal.

The Executive policy throughout the time of this public health crisis has been to advocate that where people can work from home, they should. This has resulted in the provision of modern and suitable Information Technology equipment and software for tens of thousands of workers across the public and private sectors, with only those that are required to attend their place of work, being asked to do so.

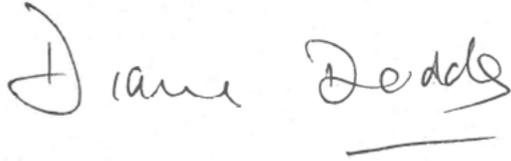
I firmly believe that these enforced actions have changed the working environment landscape forever, especially for workers who can and have been working remotely and from their own homes. Although much too early to be certain, there are indications that this new way of working can have regional economic benefits, especially for our towns and cities out with Belfast.

As you will understand, my immediate economic focus and that of my Executive colleagues at this time, is on supporting the businesses, people and places most heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, and creating a foundation on which to promote economic recovery and deliver a greener, competitive and inclusive economy.

Beyond this, I will be bringing forward a longer-term vision for the economy, which will set out the economic policy objectives that demonstrate how we will seek to drive economic growth and prosperity for the benefit of all people across Northern Ireland.

My Department will work with key partners including our Local Councils, private sector, business representative organisations, Voluntary & Community sectors and academia as we move towards development and implementation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane Dodds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

DIANE DODDS MLA
Minister for the Economy