

16th September 2014**Agenda Item: 7****REPORT OF THE GROUP MANAGER, CORPORATE STRATEGY****BETTER BROADBAND FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE – ADDITIONAL
STAFFING RESOURCE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for the establishment of one additional post to support delivery of the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire programme.

Information and advice

2. Economic Development Committee receives quarterly updates on the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire (BBfN) programme. Recent reports have highlighted progress with the infrastructure build and the fact that superfast broadband delivered through the programme is now going 'live' at various locations across the County.
3. At its meeting in March, Committee approved the delivery plan and budget for the Economic Development service, in line with the previously approved (at Policy Committee) corporate Economic Development Strategy. The delivery plan and budget included a £50,000 allocation to support demand stimulation activities linked to the BBfN programme.
4. In July of this year, Nottinghamshire County Council secured an additional £50,000 of revenue funding to support demand stimulation activity from the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership. Proposals have now been developed for the total demand stimulation funding package, which include the establishment of a new post to support this activity.

Demand stimulation package

5. As Members are aware, the capital element of the BBfN programme will see a combined investment of over £15 million in new fibre infrastructure in Nottinghamshire over the next two years. £3.3 million of this will be provided by County Council, City Council and Borough and District Councils. Over 50,000 premises will have access to superfast broadband as a result of this investment. Community and business awareness of the programme is targeted through a joint communication plan with the supplier, BT / Openreach. However, community and business appreciation of the benefits of superfast broadband needs to be enhanced, as does awareness of how residents and businesses will be able to access new superfast services. For example, upgrades to superfast are not automatic and customers will have to request an

upgrade (at a cost) and have new router equipment installed in their homes and businesses.

6. There are three key drivers behind the Council's proposed demand stimulation package:
 - Business growth and connectivity, ensuring that the full benefits to business of the £15 million capital investment are secured. Access to fibre broadband services is recognised as the 'fourth utility' and is particularly important for businesses operating in a global marketplace;
 - Transformation of services. Public sector organisations, businesses and the third sector are increasingly looking for ways to deliver their services online – be this transactional (i.e. applying for licenses / permits; online banking; library services) or more fundamental service redesign (i.e. tele-health appointments; self-assessments for home care provision). Ensuring that local residents understand these future changes and are enabled to benefit from them is a key priority;
 - Return on investment. The Council and its public sector partners who are investing in the new fibre infrastructure need to be confident that it will bring the benefits outlined above and others to their residents and businesses. In addition, there is a revenue sharing mechanism within the contract with BT, which will see funds recouped by the County Council should take-up through the new fibre infrastructure exceed a threshold (set nationally at 20%). The amount of revenue that can be shared increases proportionately with the take-up rate achieved through the programme, but it must be reinvested in digital-based projects
7. Given the above, the BBfN team have designed a demand stimulation package with a community outreach focus. Activity will be targeted at locations as their fibre infrastructure becomes live, thus maximising the opportunities for positive PR for the programme and capturing potential customers' interest from the outset.
8. Activities will include events/seminars, which will be aimed at both households and local businesses and will be tailored as such, raising awareness of the benefits of fibre broadband and how to access the new network. Innovative projects will also be delivered to engage local communities, such as 'App' competitions and school-based activities.
9. Alongside this, more structured engagement will take place with key stakeholders within the targeted communities, particularly with our Parish Council partners and other local support networks, which will be able to help us raise awareness within their areas.
10. A further key element to the demand stimulation package will be the development of the Digital Champions network. This will provide a network of local hubs and willing volunteers, which will provide support for those looking to do more online. Work has already begun in recruiting Digital Champions and the demand stimulation work will take this on to the next stage.

11. Although some activity is already underway, a detailed plan for the demand stimulation package is being devised and will be shared with the Economic Development Committee at a future meeting.

Staffing proposal

12. In order to deliver the demand stimulation package, it is proposed to establish one new post of Broadband Engagement Officer. Core activities of the post-holder will include:
 - Working with the broadband team to drive up the demand for broadband amongst citizens and businesses, and to follow up leads generated
 - Generating and stimulating interest in the programme within rural settlements and the catchment area;
 - Undertaking outreach work within villages and with Parish Councils to inform communities about the programme, the aspirations, and the opportunities to become engaged with the delivery of the programme;
 - Encouraging the development of community groups with shared objectives within each community;
 - Establishing a Local Community Champion Network for all groups to meet and exchange experience and ideas to support their projects with regular network events;
 - Executing target plans that will meet or exceed the take-up targets provided by project management
 - Building relationships with service providers and businesses to help overcome any difficulties experienced with take up of broadband
 - Organising and running events designed to drive the take-up, and use of, broadband services
 - Delivering presentations to businesses and other interested groups, and managing Q&A sessions
 - Designing innovative interventions with the aim of stimulating take-up of broadband services, such as designing cabinet sticker competitions with local schools
 - Preparing reports showing activity each month including contacts, number of sign ups, all relevant business data and individual target achievement
13. The post will be full-time, fixed term until March 2016 initially, with the potential for it to be extended to March 2017 subject to delivery timescales associated with the Superfast Extension Programme. The post has been indicatively graded by the JE team at Band A (£24,892 – £28,922).
14. Subject to Committee approval, the post will be advertised at the end of September. Allowing for recruitment timescales and possible notice periods, it is anticipated that a post-holder would start this work in the early part of 2015.

Reason(s) for Recommendations

15. The creation of new posts within the Economic Development Service requires this Committee's consideration and approval.

Statutory and Policy Implications

16. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described in the report.

Financial implications

17. The demand stimulation budget currently stands at £100,000 (£50,000 previously approved by this Committee and £50,000 from D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership). The estimated costs of this post in 2014-15 (assuming a January start) are £8,607, rising to £34,427 for the full financial year 2015-16. Total costs, therefore, of £43,034.
18. The remaining budget for demand stimulation will be allocated against activity as outlined in points 7 to 11 above.
19. Further resource requirements for the demand stimulation programme will be assessed ahead of Committee's consideration of its delivery plan and budget for 2015-16 in March 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

20. It is recommended that Committee approves the establishment of the Broadband Engagement Officer post as outlined in this report.

Report of the Group Manager, Corporate Strategy, Celia Morris

For any enquiries about this report please contact: James Mann, 72686

Constitutional Comments [SLB 02/09/2014]

Economic Development Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report. The Council's Employment Procedure Rules require changes to staffing structure to be subject to HR advice and consultation with the recognised trade unions.

Financial Comments [SEM 28.8.14.]

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers

Report to Economic Development Committee, 11th March 2011 – Economic Development Strategy: Delivery Plan and Budget 2014-15
Quarterly reports to Economic Development Committee on Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire programme

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

ALL