

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

SUPERFAST BROADBAND IN NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides an update on the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project, details the different ways of receiving a signal in sparse local villages and outlines plans for increasing broadband penetration to our key tourism assets.
2. Policy Committee approval is being sought:
 - a) To enter into the £1 million partner agreement with the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and vary the capital programme accordingly;
 - b) Ratifies the bid submission to the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership Digital Skills Innovation Fund and, subject to the bid being successful, confirms the Council's status as an official project partner, and;
 - c) To approve relevant Member and officer attendance at the Local Government Chronicle Awards on 13 March 2019.

Information

3. The importance of building and investment in broadband infrastructure when developing connected communities is central to the Council Plan 2017-2020 Commitment 11: *Nottinghamshire is a well-connected County*.
4. Policy Committee was provided with an update on the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project in March 2018. In the nine months since, the project has made considerable progress, maintaining Nottinghamshire's position as the best digitally connected County in the East Midlands. The headline achievements of the project are illustrated at **Appendix A**. Take up continues to rise and forms an important part of the Council's forward strategy for reaching close to 100% coverage. It should be noted that as the programme starts to deliver services to the last 2% of properties in Nottinghamshire without superfast speeds, the difficulties encountered so far when operating in areas of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and on Crown Estate land, are likely to increase.
5. The project continues to both explore and attract additional funding sources to help deliver to the areas where there are no coverage plans. Following a successful European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) application, £1 million of funding has been secured which will be used to further extend superfast broadband coverage. Policy Committee approval is being sought to permit the County Council to enter into a funding agreement.
6. There has been recent engagement with the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2 LEP), and Local Full Fibre Partnership (part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport

(DCMS). On the latter, there remains an intention to submit an Expression of Interest to their Full Fibre Networks Programme, which is made up from a proportion of the £740m Government’s Infrastructure Fund available nationally to support the deployment of fibre connectivity. Bolstering the team’s resources to drive take-up and maximise the financial rebate to extend coverage, continues to an integral part of the management of the project.

7. In respect of new housing sites, the County Council continues to encourage developers to engage with telecommunications suppliers to ensure that superfast services are installed on new sites from the outset. However, there are still instances where suppliers are involved too late in the build process, with new occupants in properties unable to access adequate infrastructure. The programme continues to engage developers and encourage Local Planning Authorities to explore opportunities to mandate superfast coverage as part of the planning approval process.

The Different Ways of Receiving a Signal in Sparse Local Villages

8. The scheduling of roll out has been covered in detail in previous reports. However, it is worth restating the principles for prioritisation. The contracts with Openreach were negotiated nationally between BT and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK – part of the department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport). The contracts are predicated on maximising the number of premises connected for the public subsidy available, but only in the area that is not covered by commercial providers’ plans.
9. All electoral divisions in the County Council have seen an improvement in their connectivity. The overriding factor influencing coverage is property density per square kilometre. Areas with lower property density are more expensive to reach and therefore have lower availability figures.
10. The following three options are open to residents and small to medium sized businesses who fall outside of the planned rollout:

Option		Scheme detail
1	Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme	Grants worth £400 (maximum) to rural households that are unable to get at least a 2Mbps broadband speed
2	Community Fibre Partnership scheme from Openreach (BT)	Grants worth up to £30,000 to help co-fund the cost of upgrading a digitally isolated community
3	Nationwide Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme	Vouchers worth up to £3,000 for businesses (small to medium sized enterprises only) or £500 to residents to help with costs of connecting to full fibre.

Plans for Increasing Broadband Penetration to our Key Tourism Assets

11. Nottinghamshire’s visitor economy is worth £1.814 billion and has the potential to grow. The idea of a “digital tourist” is already a reality i.e. a person who travels with technology as a companion. Mobile continues to be the preferred channel, since it is virtual guide, translator, hotel locator, map and geolocator (i.e. where you are when using the internet or a mobile phone) all at the same time. Technology is changing tourist habits, making the art of travelling an unforgettable technological experience. Moreover, artificial intelligence personalises the user experience. Virtual reality, augmented reality and geolocation stand as the main players in the tourist sector. The Council’s key assets are strongly positioned and lend themselves to being experimental centres of new technologies in the visitor economy sector.

12. Officers are currently engaging with both digital infrastructure network providers and universities to explore how to revolutionise the visitor experience, especially in, but not limited to Sherwood Forest. As plans develop, Policy Committee will receive further updates.

Digital Skills Innovation Fund

13. Over £1 million has been available to Local Enterprise Partnerships for initiatives, which help boost the digital skills of underrepresented groups and disabled people. At its October 2018 Board meeting, the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership approved a funding submission known as the “Pull and Push” for Digital Skills project. This project will support 325 people from underrepresented groups, focusing on women and autistic people, building pathways to digital jobs.

14. In-kind match funding support for Nottinghamshire (equivalent to £1,000) is being provided via Inspire, who are supporting the hosting of five full-day workshops in libraries across the County. It is anticipated that successful bids will be announced in December 2018 with the project expected to begin in January 2019 and run until November 2019.

15. If the bid is successful, the D2N2 LEP will establish a ‘Digital Skills Partnership’ for D2N2 to act as an advisory group to support the projects delivery. The time between the fund launch and closure was so short that a report to Policy Committee was not possible. Therefore, ratification of the bid submission and, subject to the bid being successful, approval of the County Council becoming an official project partner, is now sought. This will then enable the County Council to be a part of the advisory board to influence and direct the rollout of the project in Nottinghamshire.

Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards

16. As reported to the November Committee, our collaboration has seen Openreach select Nottinghamshire as the first area in the East Midlands to benefit from their commercial rollout of ultrafast broadband; offering speeds about 24 times faster than the current UK average.

17. As further testament of our successful public/private partnership with Openreach, the Council has been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2019. Officers have been invited to make a presentation to the judging panel in January 2019, with the success (or otherwise) announced at the awards ceremony on 13 March 2019 in London. The awards ceremony itself acts as a national platform for sharing best practice and acquiring new ideas, as attendees will learn about the innovative steps taken elsewhere.

18. The Council’s Transport and Travel Services Team will arrange travel and accommodation for Officers, with these costs being met from the existing broadband revenue budget allocation. Openreach will meet all other costs of participating in the awards.

Other Options Considered

19. The do nothing option was discounted for the following three reasons:

- a) A key commitment of the Council Plan is to ensure Nottinghamshire is well connected. Drawing down the EAFRD monies, helps improve broadband speeds available to the county’s rural business community;

- b) Having the opportunity to have a seat on the Advisory Board, as an official partner in the D2N2 LEP Digital Skills Innovation Fund project, means the Council can influence and develop the Nottinghamshire output elements, and;
- c) The Local Government Chronicle launched the LGC Awards 21 years ago. They were the very first awards scheme to recognise and celebrate achievements from across local government. The shortlisting presents the opportunity for Council employees and our partner to be able to share in the collective achievement of the strong public/private collaboration developed over the last 5 years.

Reasons for recommendations

20. To ensure Committee receives up-to-date knowledge on the progress of the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

22. Subject to Policy Committee approval to enter into the EAFRD partnership agreement, the £1 million will require a variation to the capital programme.

23. Travel and accommodation costs for officer's attendance at the LGC Awards, will be met from the existing Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project revenue budget allocation.

Human Resources Implications

24. The report does not contain any human resources implications.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Delegates authority to the Corporate Director Place, in consultation with the Chair of Policy Committee, to finalise the £1 million European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development partnership agreement.
- 2) Ratifies the bid submission to the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership Digital Skills Innovation Fund and, subject to the bid being successful, confirms the Council's status as an official project partner.
- 3) Approves attendance of the Chair or Vice-Chair of Policy Committee and relevant officers at the Local Government Chronicle Awards event on 13 March 2019.

COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS, MBE
Leader of the County Council

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Constitutional Comments [EP 23/11/2018]

25. The recommendations fall within the remit of the Policy Committee by virtue of its terms of reference. The terms of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development partnership agreement should be approved by the Group Manager Legal, Democratic and Complaints prior to signing.

Financial Comments [RK 22/11/2018]

26. The financial implications are set out in paragraphs 22 and 23 of the report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- *Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire (BBfN) Programme Contract 3 - Report to Policy Committee, 28-03-2018 – published*
- *Better Broadband Subsidy Scheme for Nottinghamshire website at:*
<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/business-community/better-broadband-for-nottinghamshire-programme/subsidy-scheme>
- *BT's 'Community Fibre Partnership' project details are available on* <http://www.bt-ngb.com/community-fibre-partnerships>
- *Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme information can be found on*
<https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/>

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

Appendix A: Headline achievements of the Better Broadband for Nottinghamshire project

	<p>577 roadside cabinets have been installed across 74 difference exchange areas, connecting more than 78,000 premises to fibre broadband</p>
	<p>55% of premises passed by our project have switched to a superfast broadband service</p>
	<p>To date, rebates and savings have added a further £4.8 million of delivery to the project. As a result, an additional 12,170 residents and 6,772 businesses have access to superfast broadband</p>
	<p>Broadband speeds of greater than 100 Megabits per second (Mbps) will be delivered to 233 businesses and 2,361 residents by September 2019</p>
	<p>£1 million European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding bid has been successful which will see an extra 1,051 premises (256 businesses and 795 residents) receiving access to superfast broadband</p>
	<p>An independent social economic report has estimated over a 15 years period, the project will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generate £302 million for the Nottinghamshire economy, representing an £11 return on every £1 of public and private investment • Create 5,800 new full time equivalent (FTE) jobs, rising to 8,080 at a cost of £3,460 per job following the completion of the third phase of roll-out • Deliver £127 million in Gross Value Added (GVA), because of businesses making use of fibre broadband to deliver productivity benefits, to develop new products and services and to open up new markets.
	<p>We have applied to Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for a £10,000 grant to fund an interactive 'When and Where' map to improve information on broadband availability and speed and the subsequent roll-out to 2020.</p>