

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **5G TESTBEDS AND TRIALS PROGRAMME**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform Policy Committee of the two consortium-led concept proposals to Governments 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme.

#### **Information**

2. The Council Plan, *Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future* (2017-2021), prioritises improving broadband services by completing the roll-out of a fibre-based digital network and creating the environment to support the next generation of fixed and mobile digital connectivity. The Council understands the importance of maintaining and improving the county's infrastructure; be that roads, transport or broadband. All three are essential ingredients for providing residents and businesses with improved access to markets to achieve economic growth and increase productivity. It is well known that digital technologies offer great promise to transform economies and societies, creating new opportunities for better service delivery in health, education and social protection.
3. It is a testament of the excellent public-private partnership, coupled with the Council's 'open for business' collaborative approach, that for the past eight years Nottinghamshire has been able to lay claim of maintaining the East Midlands vanguard position for the percentage of full and partial fibre-based broadband availability. We continue to have strong foundations on which to build. On 23 September, there was cross party support for our approach to digitally enabled transformation by the Council's Improvement and Change Sub-Committee.
4. In the Autumn Statement 2016, the Government announced its intention to invest in a nationally coordinated programme of 5G testbed facilities and trials, as part of over £1bn of funding announced to boost the UK's digital infrastructure.
5. The 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) was set up as a centre of excellence in 2017, to press forward the work in this area. The Programme aims to encourage and fund the creation of a series of Testbeds and Trials in a range of geographic and markets to explore the benefits and challenges of deploying 5G technologies.
6. On 14 November 2018, Policy Committee received a report which set out Nottinghamshire County Council's plans to participate in the connected and autonomous vehicle (CAV) revolution. Since then, we have been exploring how the Council can create an environment that encourages private sector innovations that facilitate the testing and integration of

autonomous vehicles on Highways and within other strategically important activities, such as the visitor economy.

7. On 27 August 2019, Government reopened the 5G Testbed and Trials grant funding competition. Having reviewed the guidance and attended a DCMS-led briefing event, a submission to this Programme in collaboration with our two local universities, is proposed. This will help the Place Department bring forward up to two concept projects.
8. The Programme is split into two grant funding competitions: Industrial and Rural Connected Communities. In recognising the conflict between commercial sensitivity and a competitive process, only the headline overviews are being shared in this public report, as follows:

#### **Industrial**

- a) Focused on trialing CAV's to improve connectivity to a business park, building 5G infrastructure, utilising a planned minibuss network and connecting people from the main bus corridors to employment opportunities.

#### **Rural Connected Communities (RCC)**

- b) Focused on trialing 5G technology in a forest setting, testing virtual and augmented reality on tour buses and connecting visitors to strategically located tourist attractions in Nottinghamshire. The use of a dedicated bus is envisaged, which would see travel between the main bus corridors and attractions.
9. Both submissions require bringing relevant partners together. By building upon the contacts from the September 2018 event, the two consortiums will involve at least one business, a mobile network operator, a CAV manufacturer and the Universities.
  10. To ensure the consortium stands every chance of hitting the tight submission deadlines, in the event of consortium members not having the capacity to write the bid submission, an expert bid-writing firm may need to be commissioned.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. In November 2018, Policy Committee mandated Officers exploring external funding as a possible match-funding source for concept projects. Further, the DCMS Briefing Event confirmed that both proposals would have a high possibility of being shortlisted for the next stage. For these reasons, the 'do nothing' option was discounted.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

12. The output from last year's Adapting to CAV event confirmed participating collaborators (public, private and academia), under the strong leadership of Nottinghamshire County Council, are well placed to bid for Government and external funding investment. The 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme is a route to obtaining funding to address smart local highways and autonomous vehicles opportunities and challenges.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

13. 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**

14. Whilst there are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. In the unlikely event of needing to commission a bid-writing firm, it is anticipated that the Council would contribute up to a maximum ceiling of £10,000 towards the costs of both funding submissions. Costs would be met from 2019/20 Broadband Programme staffing and initiatives budget.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

15. One of the key activities detailed in the Place Departmental Strategy (2019-2021) is reviewing our current public transport network arrangements and developing new solutions to support public access to sustainable transport. Alongside car makers and technology firms, we are determined to get autonomous and sustainable technology onto our roads. This will contribute to improving air quality and will encourage the use of alternative modes of transport throughout the county.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. It is recommended that Policy Committee agrees:
- a) to commission appropriate external bid writing support
  - b) to bring a further report in the event of either or both concept proposals being invited to the interview stage.

**COUNCILLOR MRS KAY CUTTS, MBE**  
**Leader of the Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:** Nicola McCoy-Brown, Growth and Economic Development, Tel: 0115 977 2580

## **Constitutional Comments (AK - 19/09/2019)**

16. The recommendation falls within the remit of the Policy Committee under its terms of reference

## **Financial Comments (SES - 18/09/2019)**

17. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 12 of the report. The balance of the Broadband Reserve is currently £95,665 and is to be utilised for Broadband staffing and project costs.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

- *An Update on The Cross Council Digital Programme – Improving Customer Experience Through Digital Developments*, Report to Improvement and Change Sub Committee, published 23 September 2019
- Details on the 5G Testbeds and Trials Programme, published 23 July 2018 and last updated on 27 August 2019, is available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/5g-testbeds-and-trials-programme>
- Place Departmental Strategy available online at: <https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/1739235/place-departmental-strategy-2019-2021.pdf>
- *Future Technology – Transport and Connectivity*, Report to Policy Committee, published 14 November 2018

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All