

11th March 2014**Agenda Item: 6****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, POLICY, PLANNING AND
CORPORATE SERVICES****BETTER BROADBAND FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE – SUPERFAST
EXTENSION PROGRAMME****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek Committee approval for the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Government's recently launched 'Superfast Extension Programme' (SEP).

Information and advice

2. In the 2013 Autumn Statement, the Chancellor announced that an additional £250 million would be allocated by the Government towards initiatives that support the delivery of superfast broadband to over 95% of premises in the UK. This extends the reach of fibre broadband access from the 90% that will be delivered through the existing Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme. The Government has called the new fund the 'Superfast Extension Programme' (SEP). It will be managed through BDUK along similar lines to the previous programme.
3. On Feb 25th 2014, the Government announced county level allocations of the SEP and gave further detail about how it expects this additional investment to be delivered. Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham have a joint allocation of £2.63 million. Nottinghamshire County Council will continue to act as the lead authority on behalf of Nottinghamshire partners.
4. As with the existing BDUK programme, the Government's investment must be matched £ for £ through local sources, including local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and EU funds. As Members of this Committee are aware, Nottinghamshire County Council has committed £2.15 million to the existing programme, alongside a combined contribution of £1 million from Nottinghamshire's Borough and District Councils and £2.7 million from EU funds.
5. The Government has set out three main options for how lead local authorities can procure their SEP contracts. These are:
 - managing the new requirements through change control of existing contracts;

- undertaking mini-competitions using the existing BDUK Broadband Framework (BT and Fujitsu)
- undertaking a new open procurement, which would have to be compliant with EU requirements

Initial anecdotal feedback suggests that many Councils will prefer the first option as the other two could incur significant time and financial implications.

6. Expressions of Interest in the SEP fund must be returned to the Government by March 25th 2014. If approved, local authorities will then be invited to submit a full application (funding request) by 30th June 2014. Funds will come on stream relatively quickly as the Government's ambition is to hit the 95% target by 2017.

Nottinghamshire's Expression of Interest

7. Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham have an indicative allocation from the new fund of £2.63 million. Further information has been requested from the Government to understand how this allocation was arrived at and how many premises in the City and County areas the Government would anticipate benefitting from this additional investment. This may affect the eventual submission from Nottinghamshire County Council.
8. The Expression of Interest requires the Council to state how much match funding they anticipate being able to secure. This will determine how much Government investment can be drawn down. At this stage it is proposed that the County Council submit an Expression of Interest at the full amount, and that we suggest match funding will be requested through the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and its forthcoming Local Growth Fund and EU funds.
9. Submitting an Expression of Interest does not commit the County Council to anything but will enable us to reserve our position whilst further negotiation takes place with the D2N2 LEP in terms of the likely availability of match funding.
10. Subject to the outcome of these considerations, a further report will be brought back to Committee with recommendations for next steps in advance of the deadline for full applications of 30th June 2014.

Reason(s) for Recommendations

11. The Government has invited Nottinghamshire County Council to submit an Expression of Interest for the Superfast Extension Programme by 25th March 2014. Committee approval for any submission is required.

Statutory and Policy Implications

12. 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. It is recommended that Committee:

- (a) approves the submission of an Expression of Interest to the Superfast Extension Programme for Nottinghamshire;
- (b) receives a further report on the Superfast Extension programme in advance of the deadline for submission of full applications of 30th June 2014.

Report of the Corporate Director, Policy, Planning and Corporate Services, Jayne Francis-Ward

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Constitutional Comments [NAB 27.02.2014]

Economic Development Committee has authority to approve the recommendation set out in this report by virtue of its terms of reference.

Financial Comments [SEM 28/02/2014]

The financial implications are set out in the report.

Background Papers

25th February 2014 – letter from BDUK to Mick Burrows with allocations attached.

25th February 2014 – press release from BDUK

25th February 2014 – Superfast Extension Programme guidance note

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All