



**4 September 2012**

**Agenda Item: 6**

## **REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

### **BROADBAND PETITION**

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

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Economic Development Committee of responses to the issues raised to the Chairman and to Full Council on 5 July 2012, concerning a petition regarding improving broadband access in Bassetlaw.

#### **Information and Advice**

1. A petition of 575 signatures, organised by Bassetlaw Conservative Association was presented to the Chairman and Full Council requesting the Council does everything within its power to improve the availability of Broadband in the district of Bassetlaw by accepting the Government's offer of £4.25 million, with match funding from the County Council and the seven borough and district councils in Nottinghamshire, including Bassetlaw, proportionate to the need of each district.
2. Nottinghamshire County Council and all the Nottinghamshire local councils have match-funded the government's commitment. The current £867,000 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) bid is in the final appraisal stages and a final decision on whether approval will be granted or not is anticipated by the end of September 2012.
3. The Council has committed to using the BDUK Framework to procure a single or lead private sector delivery partner to co-fund and then deliver the installation of broadband infrastructure across the County and is waiting for more information from Government on Nottinghamshire's individual timetable and call-off slot. The Leader of the County Council has made contact with the Government to jointly explore ways in which the combined public sector investment of £8.5 million in broadband infrastructure can be accelerated, to bring faster broadband speeds to rural Nottinghamshire significantly quicker. However, the Government has confirmed that it is not expecting to receive State Aid approval until autumn. This clearly affects the ability of the Council to enter to the procurement stage. Until the Council enters the procurement phase, neither the precise locations nor mix of technologies to be deployed can be confirmed with any certainty.
4. Investing significant sums of public money in a competitive commercial market is not straight-forward and upgrading the infrastructure is but one element of this complex project. The whole project hinges on finding a suitable firm willing to make the (anticipated) £8.5 million private sector match-funding investment, and to do that the Council first has to prove demand exists. On 6 July 2012, Councillor Cutts and Councillor Girling launched the *Superfast Broadband for Notts campaign* to allow people to register their interest

[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/broadband). The aim is to achieve 5,000 pledges of support by the autumn. To date, just over 3,000 responses have been received but this falls short of a convincing case that will see the telecommunications industry match-fund the public sector commitment.

5. It is now proposed that the petitions organiser is informed that despite yielding 575 signatures from Bassetlaw residents, the information collected by the Bassetlaw Conservative Association is unable to be used in the County Council's current campaign. Regrettably, the data falls short of some of the pertinent information which is required to lobby the telecommunications industry, such as: evidence of current service provision, a willingness to receive an improved service and how much (if any) households and businesses will be willing to pay on top of their current commitment for an improved/new service.
6. It is further proposed that the petitions organiser encourages the 47,000 poorly broadband served people and businesses of Bassetlaw to pledge their support to the *Superfast Broadband for Notts campaign*.
7. The response to the petition should be noted and the petition organiser informed.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

8. 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 below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Financial Implications**

9. There are no specific financial implications arising as a consequence of this report. This may require further consideration should it be proposed that expenses or an honorarium be paid to any co-opted individual.

## **Equalities Implications**

10. An Equalities Impacts Assessment has been produced for the Nottinghamshire Broadband Plan and applies to everyone equally. It concluded that it is difficult to predict what the real implications of superfast broadband will be for the 116,011 premises (both business and residential) that are the subject of the Plan and there is the possibilities of additional, as yet unforeseen, implications for rural communities from such a digital divide.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

11. It is recommended that the contents be noted and the petition organiser be informed.

## **Report of the Chairman of the Economic Development Committee**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Nicola M<sup>c</sup>Coy-Brown ext 72250**

**Background Papers**

Bassetlaw Petition

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

All

**Constitutional Comments (SG 22/08/2012)**

The Committee has responsibility for promoting economic development, regeneration and associated activities (by virtue of paragraph 31(a) of Part 3(A) of the Constitution). The Committee is the appropriate body to consider the issues set out in this Report.