

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **25th March 2020**
Title: **Broadband briefing note**
Portfolio Area:
Wards Affected: **all**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**
Date next steps can be taken: **N/A**

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The purpose of this report is to provide the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with an overview of broadband provision within the District.

1. Background

- 1.1 Broadband is a factor that impacts all aspects of the District. For small start-up businesses it is a key avenue to market, for school children, a key educational tool, by enabling home working it can reduce commuting and have a positive impact on climate change and of course in the current pandemic for individuals and communities it can help reduce isolation and for some is a lifeline.
- 1.2 Therefore in conclusion, effective Broadband solutions impact on the economic prosperity and the health and wellbeing of our individuals and communities within the District.
- 1.3 In England 97.2% of premises have access to superfast broadband (defined as having a download speed in excess of 24mbps). South Hams currently sits at 88.9% and in the bottom quartile of local authority areas. 1.4% of premises have access to broadband speeds below 2 mbps.
- 1.4 These and more statistics can be viewed at;
<https://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local>

2. Connecting Devon and Somerset

- 2.1. Connecting Devon and Somerset (CDS) is a programme that is centrally funded by Central Governments Building Digital UK (BDUK) department to improve broadband and increase superfast connectivity across the Devon and Somerset County Council areas.
- 2.2. Even with the CDS scheme and existing commercial providers, it is estimated that approximately 3,200 homes / business premises in the District will not have access to Superfast Broadband.
- 2.3. Gigaclear were awarded the contract to deliver Superfast and Ultrafast broadband within the South Hams area (referred to as Lot 5 within the CDS programme). Due to a number of reasons and with the agreement of BDUK that contract was terminated and retendered. The contract was awarded to Airband on December 23rd 2020.
- 2.4. Appendix A is the briefing issued by CDS at that time.

3. The Council's Activity

- 3.1 Officers successfully applied for funding to the Local Government Associations (LGA) Digital Connectivity Programme. The joint bid with West Devon Borough Council has resulted in an award for £19,500 which will be utilised to fund a Broadband Community Support Officer for 12 months.
- 3.2 The role will be responsible for;
 - a. Liaising and supporting communities
 - b. Identifying additional funding streams for individual projects
 - c. Proactively working with CDS to identify areas and communities that could benefit from a scheme
 - d. Ensuring that the community (individuals and businesses) maximise the potential benefit of the new broadband infrastructure.
- 3.3 The role is currently out to recruitment.

4. Gigabit Voucher Scheme

- 4.1 BDUK have an offer known as the Gigabit Voucher Scheme and support additional communities. This scheme enables rural communities (residents and businesses) with broadband speeds of less than 100Mbps can use vouchers to apply for funding for a commercial provider to provide superfast / FTTP solutions that otherwise would not be commercially viable. The vouchers are worth **£1,500** per home and up to **£3,500** for each small to

medium-sized business (SME). Details of the scheme are available here;

[Gigabit Vouchers – Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport](#)

- 4.2 How the Gigabit Voucher Scheme works;
 - a. A community agrees on the need for a scheme.
 - b. They then apply to a provider for a quotation to provide a service.
 - c. On receiving the quotation, the community assess whether they will have enough interest to pay for scheme with the vouchers.
 - d. If they do, they can apply for the vouchers from the DCMS. Residents and Businesses apply for the vouchers and once the value of the vouchers applied for reaches the quotation value, DCMS authorise the provider to start the delivery of the scheme.
 - e. Within 12 months of completion of the scheme the residents must apply for a broadband connection.
 - f. At this point the supplier is paid by DCMS.

5. Universal Service Obligation (USO)

- 5.1 Households and businesses now have a legal right to request a decent, affordable broadband connection. BT is the Universal Service Provider for the UK. This is defined in law as a service with a download speed of at least 10Mbps and an upload speed of at least 1Mbps. This enables a good quality experience when accessing all common internet applications including multiple TV streams, access to digital public services and online shopping. Ofcom has determined a USO-compliant service must cost customers no more than £46.10 per calendar month.
- 5.2 BT is currently in the process of writing directly to all eligible premises to inform them of their right to request the USO. Customers are eligible if no commercial service is available (from BT or any other provider) that meets the USO specification.
- 5.3 Ofcom estimates that only around 0.5% of all premises in the UK (c.167,000) cannot access decent broadband, given the widespread availability of super-fast broadband and wireless solutions. It is these remaining premises that are eligible for the USO.
- 5.4 BT is required to provide the most efficient solution to customers that request a broadband upgrade. Typically, this will be via 'full fibre' provided by Openreach (part of BT Group) – a gigabit-capable connection running all the way to a customer's home. This will deliver speeds that are significantly greater than the 'decent' broadband that has been defined under the USO.
- 5.5 For USO-eligible premises, BT is required to upgrade their connectivity, on request, at no cost to the customer if the necessary works cost £3,400 or less.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	N/A
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	Officers successfully applied for funding to the Local Government Associations (LGA) Digital Connectivity Programme. The joint bid with West Devon Borough Council has resulted in an award for £19,500 which will be utilised to fund a Broadband Community Support Officer for 12 months. The additional £9,500 per council will be funded from existing salary underspends.
Risk	N	
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Economy Health and Wellbeing
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	A positive difference to carbon reduction by enabling homeworking for more residents
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Non as a direct impact of this report
Safeguarding		None as a direct impact of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None as a direct impact of the report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None as a direct impact of the report
Other implications		None

Supporting Information

Appendices: Appendix A – CDS briefing 23/12/20.

Background Papers: Not Applicable

Approval and clearance of report

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed/sign off	Yes
SLT Rep briefed/sign off	Yes
Relevant Heads of Practice sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
Accessibility checked	Yes

