

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 5
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Report of the Executive Director of Strategic Resources

Contact Officer(s) – Richard Godfrey, ICT & Transactional Services Partnership Manager

Contact Details – richard.godfrey@peterborough.gov.uk / tel 01733 317989

UPDATE ON SUPERFAST BROADBAND IN RURAL AREAS

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities with an update on Superfast Broadband in Rural Areas following a request made by the Commission.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities are requested to endorse the work undertaken as part of the Connecting Cambridgeshire to Superfast broadband.

3. LINKS TO THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

- 3.1 By delivering Superfast Broadband in Rural Areas some of the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy such as ‘delivering substantial and truly sustainable growth’ will be achieved.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council are the lead authorities responsible for delivering the Connecting Cambridgeshire project. The council is working in partnership with district councils, the Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership and key partners in business, health and education who belong to the Broadband Delivery Group. Connecting Cambridgeshire is aiming for at least 90% of homes and businesses across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to have access to superfast broadband with speeds of 25Mbps or more and a minimum speed of 2Mbps for the remaining 10% of premises by 2015.
- 4.2 The roll out of better broadband services is due to begin in 2013 although it is too early to predict which areas would benefit first as these decisions would form part of the procurement process.
- 4.3 The criteria for Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) funding highlighted that the implementation would focus on the areas deemed to be ‘white areas’ by BDUK to be the areas most likely to benefit from the changes. Although there was no guarantee where the infrastructure improvements would be across the country, some rural areas would be in the 10% not covered by the project to access superfast broadband.
- 4.4 There were two main arms of the project:
1. The demand registration piece
 2. The procurement of Broadband and of the supplier
- 4.5 There were a number of campaigns in Peterborough to increase the Demand Registration take up across the area. These included:
- E-mails sent to all Citizen Panel members (850+) and contacts at the Hospital, Fire and Police authorities, Peterborough City College, Serco, Vivacity, Enterprise, PECT and Perkins to add to their intranet sites for staff;

- Numerous Press Releases in the Peterborough Telegraph;
- 12,100 leaflets sent to residents in “white areas”;
- A3 posters distributed to Supermarkets, Dr’s surgeries, libraries and community centres
- Adverts placed on Facebook and Twitter;
- Full page articles in The Viewer, the Hampton Viewer and the Hampton Gazette;
- Links added to the Council’s website to Connecting Cambridgeshire;
- Links on the Council’s intranet site;
- Serpentine Green and East of England Show display stands;
- Mobile text message to over 1000 Council handsets promoting the campaign;
- Display stands at Business Focus group and the Parish Conference;
- Display stands at the Council Chief Executive staff briefings;
- Display stands at the GPP Annual Forum;
- Broadband Champions meetings with Fengate representatives;
- Leaflet distribution to all premises within Fengate;
- Posters, leaflets delivered to all primary and secondary schools in the “white areas”;
- Resource pack containing vital information handed to all Parish Councils within the “white areas” at the Parish Conference.

4.6 The final figure for Demand Registration across Peterborough and Cambridgeshire was 23,676 of which 3158 (13.34%) of the registrations were from Peterborough making it the fastest growing and one of the biggest broadband campaigns in the country. The demand registration campaign ran through to 31 December.

4.7 The project went out to tender and five suppliers passed the initial prequalification questionnaire stage. An event was held to invite suppliers in and talk to them about what was expected from them and explain what the vision was in order to give them a chance to decide whether they wanted to proceed with their bids and all five wanted to continue. The next stage was an initial submission from the potential suppliers, followed by a competitive dialogue phase, before final submission from which a supplier will be appointed early in the new year. The roll out of better broadband across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is expected to take up to three years. At this stage, the procurement process and evaluation is still underway and the preferred supplier is still to be determined.

5. KEY ISSUES

5.1 Superfast broadband will help to boost growth and create jobs, improve our health and make life easier, learn new skills for success and support people who need it.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Connecting Cambridgeshire is a city-wide project and as such there are no implications for any individual Ward.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 As part of the procurement process notices were placed in the local press. There is a regular Member Officer Working Board which will receive updates on the Superfast broadband project. A presentation was given to the rural areas neighbourhood committees and resource packs issued to all parish clerks.

8. NEXT STEPS

8.1 A further update report can be presented to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities at an agreed date in the future. Monitoring of the Connecting Cambridgeshire project will continue through the Member Officer Working Board.

9. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

9.1 There were no background documents used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 There are no appendices to the report.

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