

SCRUTINY COMMISSION FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES	Agenda Item No. 4
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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 paper 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 The link to the Sustainable Community Strategy is by helping in ‘delivering substantial and truly sustainable growth’.

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. ([Ofcom](#) defines ‘superfast broadband’ as broadband with potential headline download access speeds greater than 24 Mbps).
- 4.2 The Council’s contribution to the project of £3m was approved as part of the budget agreed at Full Council. The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities should note the recent Cabinet Member Decision Notice approval of the submission of the Local Broadband Plan.
- 4.3 The project is taking a dual track approach of procurement and demand registration to achieve faster broadband access to support economic growth and improve the health and wellbeing of residents by influencing and intervening in the market. The Local Broadband Plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has been approved by BDUK, the Government funding and advice body, to meet the requirements for the allocation of £6.7million towards the project.
- 4.4 The formal procurement exercise has commenced with the Pre - Qualification Questionnaire stage due to be completed shortly. The contract award is due within this calendar year when a single supplier or consortium of suppliers, will be expected to make a significant investment in rolling out superfast broadband for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough from 2013.

A demand registration workstream is up and running in parallel with the procurement process, supported by a countywide campaign to encourage householders and businesses to register their support for better broadband online, or on paper forms available in libraries, council offices and public buildings. The 'Get Cambridgeshire Connected' campaign has featured prominently on the Connecting Cambridgeshire website at www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk.

- 4.5 This is the call to action for residents, businesses and community groups, who have a key part to play in the success of the project by showing suppliers where there is most demand for access to faster and better broadband services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. By clicking on the 'Get Cambridgeshire Connected' button, householders and businesses can register their support for the broadband campaign in minutes with just a postcode and landline phone number. Visitors to the site will also be able to check their broadband speeds, volunteer to support the campaign as Digital Champions, ask for business advice and receive regular updates.
- 4.6 This registration process can also be accessed via the city council's website – there is a clickable button on the home page under the Features section. Council staff have also been encouraged to support the campaign, which is featured on Insite in different messaging forms each week.
- 4.7 The campaign message has been bolstered externally with articles in the Peterborough Evening Telegraph and regular posts via the city council's Twitter account. Several businesses have already pledged their support and have offered to act as case studies for the need for faster connectivity. As part of the demand registration a communications plan has been developed which has included:
- Communication with all parish councils, schools and local businesses
 - Press releases to local news agencies
 - Roadshow at Serpentine Green and at the East of England Show
 - The Greater Peterborough Partnership
 - Opportunity Peterborough

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.
- 5.2 The roll out of better broadband services is due to begin in 2013, but it is too early to predict which areas will benefit first as these decisions will form part of the procurement process.
- 5.3 The Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities are requested to note that the criteria for BDUK funding highlights that the implementation will focus on the areas deemed to be "white areas" by BDUK to be the areas that are most likely to benefit from the changes. Although there is no guarantee where the infrastructure improvements will be across the County, some rural areas will be in the 10% not covered by the project to access superfast broadband.

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.

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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