

Report to: Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 15 March 2017

By: Chair of the Review Board

Title: Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband

Purpose: To present the outcomes of the scrutiny review and make recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION: That the Committee considers and endorses the report of the Review Board, and makes recommendations to Cabinet for comment, and County Council for approval.

1. Background

1.1 As many services go on-line, having good internet access is becoming essential to daily living. As part of a Government initiative, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is taking part in the national Superfast Broadband Programme, which aims to increase access to superfast broadband services. ESCC set up the Broadband Project to deliver the investment in infrastructure necessary to enable wider access to superfast broadband services in East Sussex.

1.2 The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee established the Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband in East Sussex to consider a number of issues concerning the delivery of the Broadband Project, brought to its attention by ESCC Councillors and residents in the County. These were:

- Broadband speeds have not improved for some residents and small businesses, despite being connected to fibre enabled services;
- Broadband speeds are slow at peak times of demand;
- Coverage has not reached all residents and premises, and some have been left with slow or no broadband;
- In a number of cases, provision of information concerning the timing and availability of superfast broadband has been poor, and precise information about when or whether superfast broadband will be provided to particular premises is not available.

1.3 The Review examined a number of lines of enquiry to explore these issues, which are reflected in the report. The lines of enquiry were:

- What has been delivered so far under the first contract with British Telecom (BT Group);
- Whether the roll out of the second contract will address residents' concerns about broadband speeds;
- Future coverage and whether there are any other measures that can be taken to improve broadband coverage and speeds;
- Residents' expectations of the project; and
- Communication about the project.

1.4 In undertaking the review, the Review Board examined the delivery of the Contract 1 with BT Group to establish if the outcomes specified in the contract had been achieved. The Board took evidence from officers, BT, and an independent commercial advisor on the performance of the contract. The Board also spoke to ESCC Councillors, representatives from community organisations and businesses about the delivery of the project.

2. Summary

2.1 The members of the Review Board are Councillors Richard Stogdon (Chair), Claire Dowling, Michael Pursglove, Pat Rodohan, and Barry Taylor.

2.2 The attached report (appendix 1) contains the findings and recommendations of the Review Board. Copies of evidence papers listed in the report and other support documentation are available on request from the contact officer.

2.3 The Committee is recommended to receive the Review Board's report for submission to Cabinet and County Council on 18 April 2017 and 23 May 2017 respectively.

3. Recommendation

3.1 The Committee is requested to consider and endorse the report of the Review Board for submission to Cabinet and Full Council.

RICHARD STOGDON
Chair of the Review Board

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LOCAL MEMBERS: All.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None.