

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 6 June 2017

By: Assistant Chief Executive

Title: Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for the Cabinet to consider the report of the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

To consider any comments the Cabinet wishes to make to the County Council on the report of the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

1 Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) is investing £15 million, together with funding from Broadband Delivery UK and British Telecom (BT), to increase access to superfast broadband in the County. A Broadband Project was set up by ESCC to deliver infrastructure improvements in areas where commercial internet service providers were not intending to offer access to superfast broadband as part of their commercial rollout plans.

1.2 To date, two contracts have been awarded by the Broadband Project to BT Group to provide the physical telephone network infrastructure necessary to enable access to superfast broadband, particularly in the more rural parts of the County.

1.3 The Economy, Transport and Environment (ETE) Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 March 2016 agreed to establish the scrutiny review of superfast broadband following concerns raised by ESCC Councillors about the delivery of the Broadband Project. These concerns reflected a number of issues raised with them by residents and businesses, namely:

- Broadband speeds have not improved for some residents and small businesses, despite being connected to fibre enabled services;
- Broadband speeds are slow at peaks 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, the provision of information concerning the timing and availability of superfast broadband to particular premises was not available.

1.4 The review examined a number of lines of enquiry to explore the issues raised by Councillors and residents. The lines of enquiry reflected in the report are:

- What has been delivered so far under Contract 1 with BT;
- Whether the roll out of Contract 2 will address residents' concerns about broadband speeds;
- Future provision, including and whether there any other measures that can be taken to improve broadband coverage and speeds;
- Residents' expectations and communication about the Broadband Project.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee has completed its scrutiny review of superfast broadband in East Sussex. The review took evidence from Officers, BT,

ESCC Councillors, and representatives from community organisations and businesses about the delivery of the Project.

2.2 The Committee's report will be submitted to the County Council on 11 July 2017 and a copy is attached in appendix 1. Cabinet has the opportunity to comment to the County Council on the recommendations in the Scrutiny Committee's report, although it cannot alter the report. Elsewhere on the agenda (Item 6b) there is a separate report by the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport on the Scrutiny Committee's report and the department's response to the recommendations.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Cabinet is invited to consider any comments it wishes to make to the County Council on the report of the Economy, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Committee.

PHILLIP BAKER

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Local Members - All

Background Documents: None