Report to:	Cabinet
Date of meeting:	6 June 2017
By:	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport
Title:	Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband in East Sussex
Purpose:	To provide the Cabinet with the opportunity to comment on the report of the Scrutiny Committee Review on Superfast Broadband

RECOMMENDATIONS: **Cabinet is recommended to:**

(1) **note and welcome the report of the Scrutiny Committee; and**

(2) **agree to advise the County Council that, in considering the report of the Scrutiny Committee, the Council be recommended to welcome the report of the Scrutiny Committee and to agree the response of the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport to the recommendations and their implementation as set out in the action plan attached as Appendix 1 to this report.**

1. Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council (ESCC) established an infrastructure project to improve broadband coverage in the County in response to Government's Superfast Broadband Programme (formerly the Rural Broadband Programme). A Local Broadband Plan was agreed by ESCC's Cabinet on 6 March 2012, which sought to increase access to superfast broadband in the parts of the County where commercial telecoms infrastructure providers were not planning to deliver upgrades as part of their own investment plans. At that time only 3% of premises had access to superfast services and private sector investment was planned for more densely populated, predominantly urban areas where the business case for investors is less challenging (for example Hastings, Eastbourne, Hailsham, Uckfield, Bexhill; Battle, Castleham; Lewes, Crowborough, Hampden Park, Polegate, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Seaford exchange areas) although it should be noted that the project has done infill, in particular to business parks, in pockets in such exchange areas that the private sector has left behind.

1.2 ESCC used a national framework agreement and signed a contract with British Telecom (BT) Group in May 2013 to deliver a 3 year programme of infrastructure improvements. This was funded by £15m from ESCC's capital programme, a £10.64m contribution from Broadband Delivery UK and a £4.4m contribution from BT.

1.3 The Economy, Transport and Environment (ET&E) Scrutiny Committee established a Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband at its meeting on 16 March 2016. This followed representations from County Councillors who expressed residents' concerns about the delivery of the Broadband Project. These concerns were:

- 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.

2.   Supporting information

2.1   The Scrutiny Review of Superfast Broadband is welcomed by the Department as it provides a timely opportunity to review the progress of the Broadband Project, and examines the issues that lie behind resident's concerns. The Department is confident that it has also enabled a wider understanding of the engineering and technical challenges involved in the successful delivery of the contract with BT (Contract 1), and the additional work being planned and delivered through subsequent contracts (Contract 2 and, subject to award, Contract 3) to further increase superfast broadband coverage.

2.2   The action plan attached as Appendix 1, responds to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee.

3.   Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

The Scrutiny Review has provided a thorough examination of the concerns expressed by residents about the Superfast Broadband Project, and makes a number of practical recommendations to provide solutions. It is therefore recommended that Cabinet agree to the implementation of the action plan detailed in Appendix 1.

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LOCAL MEMBERS
All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
None

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPERFAST BROADBAND IN EAST SUSSEX – ACTION PLAN		
SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	**DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**	**TIMESCALE**
R1 Further steps are taken to: a. Communicate when faster speeds are available as the project rollout continues; b. Provide additional advice to residents and businesses about checking speeds, selecting an Internet Service Provider (ISP) and information on other factors that affect broadband speeds; and c. Make it easier for residents and businesses to check for themselves the broadband coverage and the speed they can receive.	a. County Councillors, Parish Councillors and Community Leaders will be advised directly when updates are made to the Rollout Table (note: the rollout table details project activity only, not the commercial activity of the private sector) b. An information pack(s) will be produced and made available directly to Members and others, as well as being published online c. As above	a. with immediate effect b. by end June 2017 c. as above
R2 Details of coverage, including maps, are published at the end of Contract 2 and further information is provided to explain how and why finite funding levels may prevent the project from enabling superfast broadband access for some harder to reach premises.	Agreed that this will be provided at contract closure of the second contract (note: this will not include details of commercial coverage by private sector investors such as BT and Virgin Media)	Contract closure (6 months post end of deployment)
R3 Information is provided at the earliest opportunity outlining those premises that may not be 'connected' to superfast broadband and that the survey results are made available to communities and smaller suppliers to encourage the development of alternative delivery methods.	This will be provided once a third contract is in place. Please note that the contract provide 6 months for the winning bidder to make use of the surveys when complete before they are made available to the wider supplier network	Tbc. Timescales are dependent upon contract award and the completion of surveys

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	SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN	TIMESCALE
R4	Once the total cost of providing superfast broadband to the remaining premises is known (or can be estimated), the Broadband Team clarifies how those premises receiving the slowest speeds will be prioritised in the context of the remaining available budget.	Options for the remaining premises will be developed and publicised once detail is known or can be estimated, and when detail is clear about remaining available budget	Tbc. Timescales are dependent upon contract award and the completion of surveys
R5	When, and if necessary, a 'community match' type funding programme is established for communities to bid into to pay for community based broadband schemes, in order to provide access for some of the hardest to reach premises not covered by the project, and a 'toolkit' is developed for communities who wish to implement their own broadband schemes.	Should Contract 3 not cover all premises, options for the remaining premises will be drawn up. This may include community match. A toolkit to assist any such communities will be developed as part of a "community match" scheme	Tbc. Timescales are dependent upon contract award and the completion of surveys
R6	Councillors, business organisations, and Parish Councils are encouraged to contact the Broadband Team with details of any Business Parks that do not have access to superfast broadband, so they can be included in the project rollout.	The Department welcomes the advice of Councillors, business organisations and Parish Councillors as to business parks that do not already have access to superfast broadband. Information will be matched against the team's own research. It would greatly assist the team if information could be provided at postcode level and sent to broadband@eastsussex.gov.uk.	Contact regarding this request will be made with Councillors, Parish Councils and business organisations once the report has been seen by Cabinet and County Council.

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPERFAST BROADBAND IN EAST SUSSEX – ACTION PLAN		
SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	**DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**	**TIMESCALE**
R7 Lessons are learnt about the management of expectations when embarking upon complex projects of this nature, and to avoid "hype" at the outset, so that there is a careful distinction between aspirations or vision statements and the actual projected outcomes.	Before embarking on the delivery of complex projects of this nature, a communications plan will be developed by the relevant project owner to ensure that messaging around aspirations and expectations is realistic, and consistent, which can be used by all those involved in the promotion of the project.	As appropriate for project concerned
R8 A phased communication plan is developed to address the expectations of residents and businesses in the County regarding the Broadband Project and recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the review. The plan should include enhancement of information available, including: a. A revision of the web site design and information so that project rollout information, frequently asked questions, and other project information is provided more clearly on the Go East Sussex, e-Sussex and ESCC web sites; b. An information pack (including information sources to check speeds, ISP service offers and availability etc.) produced to assist ESCC Councillors, Parish Councils and Community Leaders when dealing with broadband issues in their Division or area; and c. A fact sheet created to address misconceptions about the Broadband Project and some of the frequently asked questions.	Work on a simple, phased, communication plan is underway. a. Agreed. A review and revision of website information is now underway b. An information pack(s) will be produced and made available directly and online, building on the information already provided on the current website. Please note that information will not cover expected and actual rollout information, including speeds, at sub-County level c. The existing FAQs will be reviewed and updated in a fact sheet format	By end June 2017