NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting:	**CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**
Date and Time:	**TUESDAY, 28 JULY 2020, AT 2.15 PM***
Place:	**SKYPE MEETING - ONLINE**
Enquiries to:	**Email: andy.rogers@nfdc.gov.uk** **023 8028 5588 - ask for Andy Rogers**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:
*Members of the public may speak in accordance with the Council's public participation scheme:
(a) immediately before the meeting starts, on items within the Panel's terms of reference which are not on the public agenda; and/or
(b) on individual items on the public agenda, when the Chairman calls that item. Speeches may not exceed three minutes.

Anyone wishing to speak should contact the name and number shown above no later than 12.00 noon on FRIDAY 24 JULY 2020. This will allow the Council to provide public speakers with the necessary joining instructions for the Skype Meeting.

Bob Jackson
Chief Executive

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www.newforest.gov.uk

This Agenda is also available on audio tape, in Braille, large print and digital format

AGENDA

Apologies

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

    To note any declarations of interest made by members in connection with an agenda item. The nature of the interest must also be specified.

    Members are asked to discuss any possible interests with Democratic Services prior to the meeting.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

    To note any issues raised during the public participation period.

3.   BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE NEW FOREST (Pages 5 - 8)

To receive an update on Broadband Provision in the New Forest area.

4.   ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT

NEW FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL – VIRTUAL MEETINGS

<u>Background</u>

This meeting is being held virtually with all participants accessing via Skype for Business.

A live stream will be available on YouTube to allow the press and public to view meetings in real time and can also be found at the relevant meeting page on the Council's website.

<u>Principles for all meetings</u>

The Chairman will read out Ground Rules at the start of the meeting for the benefit of all participants. All normal procedures for meetings apply as far as practicable, as the new Government Regulations do not amend any of the Council's existing Standing Orders.

The Ground Rules for all virtual meetings will include, but are not limited to, the following:-

- All participants are reminded that virtual public meetings are being broadcast live on YouTube and will be available for repeated viewing. Please be mindful of your camera and microphone setup and the images and sounds that will be broadcast on public record.

- All participants are asked to mute their microphones when not speaking to reduce feedback and background noise. Please only unmute your microphone and speak when invited to do so by the Chairman.

- Councillors in attendance that have not indicated their wish to speak in advance of the meeting can make a request to speak during the meeting by typing "RTS" (Request to Speak) in the Skype chat facility. Requests will be managed by the Chairman with support from Democratic Services. The Skype chat facility should not be used for any other purpose.

- All participants should note that the chat facility can be viewed by all those in attendance.

- All participants are asked to refer to the report number and page number within the agenda and reports pack so that there is a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

<u>Voting</u>

When voting is required on a particular item, each councillor on the committee will be called to vote in turn by name, expressing their vote verbally. The outcome will be announced to the meeting. A recorded vote will not be reflected in the minutes of the meeting unless this is requested in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

By casting their vote, councillors do so in the acknowledgement that they were present for the duration of the item in question.

Technology

If individuals experience technical issues, the meeting will continue providing that it is quorate and it is still practical to do so. The Chairman will adjourn the meeting if technical issues cause the meeting to be inquorate, the live stream technology fails, or continuing is not practical.

Public Participation

Contact details to register to speak in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Procedures are on the front page of this agenda.

In order to speak at a virtual meeting, you must have the facility to join a Skype for Business Meeting. Joining instructions will be sent to registered speakers in advance of the meeting.

The Council will accept a written copy of a statement from registered speakers that do not wish to join a Skype Meeting, or are unable to. The statement will be read out at the meeting and should not exceed three minutes. Please use the contact details on the agenda front sheet for further information.

To: **Councillors:**

Alexis McEvoy (Chairman)
Alan Alvey (Vice-Chairman)
Fran Carpenter
Keith Craze
Sandra Delemare

Councillors:

Mahmoud Kangarani
Martyn Levitt
Alan O'Sullivan
Beverley Thorne
Derek Tipp

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CORPORATE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – 28 JULY 2020

BROADBAND PROVISION IN THE NEW FOREST

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the provision of broadband in New Forest District and act as background for the presentation which will be given by Programme Manager for Hampshire Superfast Broadband.

2.   BACKGROUND

2.1   The Hampshire Superfast Broadband project was initiated in 2012 at which point 80% of premises (business and residential) in the county were connected to superfast (24 Mbps) broadband services, the New Forest figure at this time was 69%. By the end of the initial development phase the figures Hampshire and New Forest were 91% and 90% respectively.

2.2   Phase 2 of the project will be completed later in 2020. This will deliver superfast speeds to 97.4% of premises across Hampshire including a forecast 95-96% for New Forest District. Both phases of this project have been contracted to and delivered by OpenReach.

2.3   In 2014, an additional 2,117 New Forest premises were connected to superfast broadband following a successful bid for £780,000 to the Rural Communities Broadband Fund.

3.   EXISTING PROVISION

3.1   The table below illustrates the latest data (Q2, 2020) on broadband speeds in New Forest District. It highlights that there are currently around 3,809 (4.5%) premises with sub-Superfast (24Mbps) speeds. There are 677 premises receiving below 2 Mbps, this restricts users to basic web surfing and email. Music streaming requires a minimum speed of around 3Mbps and BBC suggest a minimum of 5 Mbps for iPlayer.

Broadband Speed	England % of coverage	New Forest District % of coverage	New Forest Number of premises affected (Total – 84,635)
<2 Mbps	**0.3%**	**0.8%**	677
2-10 Mbps	**0.7%**	**1.3%**	1100
10-15 Mbps	**0.6%**	**1.3%**	1100
15-24 Mbps	**1.1%**	**1.1%**	931
24-30 Mbps	**0.3%**	**0.8%**	677
30+ Mbps	**96.9%**	**94.7%**	80,149
Superfast (24 Mbps+)	**97.3%**	**95.5%**	80,826

Source: Think Broadband

3.2 Virgin Media have cable provision in Totton and more recently in New Milton. This enables speeds in excess of 300 Mbps. This has a reach of approximately 20% of New Forest premises. There are no known plans to expand this network at the time of this report.

4. EXISTING LEGISLATION

4.1 Prior to the General Election of 2019, central government announced a target to reach full fibre coverage by 2033 with 15 million premises connected by 2025. In the post-election Queen's Speech, there was no explicit reference to full fibre broadband, instead a pledge to "accelerate the delivery of gigabit capable broadband". However, in the Budget of March 2020 there was a commitment to provide funding for the Shared Rural Network agreement to radically improve mobile coverage in rural areas, and a record £5 billion investment in gigabit broadband rollout in the hardest-to-reach areas of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. At the time of this report, there is no clear guidance on how this will be allocated nor how Hampshire/New Forest will benefit. Covid 19 has demonstrate how critical reliable Broadband connectivity and as we move into a Recovery phase this is likely to play a role. Broadband also has a role to play in the Climate Change agenda.

4.2 The recently approved New Forest District Local Plan (2016-36) includes a requirement to provide digital communications infrastructure including superfast broadband to new homes and business premises. Specifically, it is recognised that this will provide access to online services including remote health and social care as well as reducing the need to travel to a place of work. The Plan concludes that appropriate, universal and future proofed infrastructure should be installed and utilised across the district.

5. ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS:

5.1 Government funding is available through the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme to enable full fibre connections in the hardest to reach premises. Successful applicants can claim up to £3500 per SME and £1500 per residential premises toward the cost of installation. Any costs beyond this must be met by individual applicants. The scheme requires groups of 2 or more premises owners to submit a quotation request to OpenReach. A local group in Bank and Gritnam are in the process of finalising a scheme worth over £100,000 to deliver gigabit speeds to over 50 premises. This group have offered their support to help the development of similar projects elsewhere in the New Forest.

5.2 Where fixed line and/or cable provision do not deliver a superfast service, 4G can be utilised to enable a data connection. Whilst 4G coverage in certain geographies of the district is limited, with a dedicated aerial and booster, the limitations of this can be reduced. Data costs are however typically more expensive using this method. It is considered 5G technology will not provide an adequate solution for remote areas of the New Forest in the foreseeable future.

5.3 A Company called Toob is working with Southampton City Council and is investing £50M deploying a brand new Gigabit full fibre network across Southampton (circa 100k premises) this is seen as acting to underpin the city's economy and sustainability agenda.

5.4 The Employment Strategy for the Fawley Waterside development is based on a concept of the new community being an 'Intelligent Merchant City', with a focus on attracting and supporting the development of a cluster of innovation-based marine technology businesses.

Whist there would be a strong focus on providing accommodation for the marine industrial sector, the employment strategy seeks to promote the provision of infrastructure in digital technology to attract and support businesses in the digital sector, including the marine sector, life sciences, computer science and artificial intelligence, composite manufacturing, additive manufacturing and sustainable food production. To help achieve their vision, the applicants have set up a technology group, with the aim that there should be reliable communications infrastructure in every building to include full fibre broadband and 5G mobile technology.

5.4   It is important, in the interests of placemaking and sustainability, that the key elements of the applicant's employment strategy are delivered.

6.   FUTURE DELIVERY

6.1   It is recognised that as the gap towards 100% coverage is closed, the cost of superfast connections becomes significantly more expensive. Estimates suggest that delivering full fibre throughout the UK could cost £5bn.

6.2   Although there is ambition from government to reach full coverage there is no specific indication of any future funding programmes beyond the end of the existing Hampshire Superfast phase this year.

6.3   Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) is widely considered as the most cost-effective method of reaching the final, hard to reach premises and offers speeds significantly above the current superfast threshold of 24 Mbps.

7.   CONCLUSIONS

7.1   The proportion of superfast connected premises has increased significantly since the start of the Hampshire Superfast Broadband in 2012 from around 69% to over 95% today.

7.2   Despite government stated ambition for 100% superfast coverage, there is no clear indication of how this will be achieved, there is no confirmed funding beyond the end of the current phase 2 Hampshire project.

7.3   In order to achieve 100% coverage, a combination of technological solutions is likely beyond the traditional fixed line methods.

7.4   There is scope to aid individual rural communities through the Rural Gigabit Voucher Scheme albeit the specific bids will need to be developed by Parish Councils or individual communities.

8.   FINANCIAL, CRIME & DISORDER AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1   There are none

9.   EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATION

9.1   There are none

10.   DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1   There are none

11.   RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 The members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of this report.

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For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

Report to HCC Policy and Resources Committee (24 September 2019) – Hampshire Superfast Broadband Programme

New Forest District Council. Local Plan 2016-36 - Part 1: Planning Strategy