

## **PROVISION OF BROADBAND IN THE NEW FOREST**

### **1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides an outline update to the Hampshire Broadband Programme and supports the presentation to be given by Hampshire County Council (HCC) and BT at the meeting.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Hampshire Broadband Programme is part of the wider Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) initiative overseen by the Department for Media, Culture and Sport. The current programme is targeting 95% of premises superfast connected throughout Hampshire continuing from the previous programme to connect 90% completed in 2016.
- 2.2 The current programme is being funded by HCC at a cost of £9.2m with no direct funds from New Forest District Council.

### **3. BROADBAND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NEW FOREST**

- 3.1 The broadband coverage for the New Forest broadly reflects the wider targets for Hampshire County with 90% delivered at the end of the previous programme and approximately 95% coverage scheduled to be delivered by the end of the current programme in 2018. Further progress beyond this has not been confirmed by government at this stage although an announcement is expected later this year.
- 3.2 By March 2017 a total of 109 cabinets had been made live in the New Forest, connecting a total of 23,050 homes.
- 3.3 Take-up of broadband services provided varies greatly throughout the New Forest from 96% in Marchwood Ward to just 16% in Ringwood South. Premises connected benefit the future delivery of service through clawback/gainshare allowing further funds to be made available for broadband delivery. It is therefore in the best interest of communities which are currently unconnected that take-up figures in connected area are higher.
- 3.4 Where there is no scheduled upgrade for upgraded service, some communities are now seeking to fund their own solutions privately. The most notable example of this is in Hyde and Ellingham where approximately £177,000 was raised within the local community to provide an improved service to 475 premises. This initiative was delivered with the (non-financial) support of New Forest District Council and led to the production of the Brand New Forest Broadband Toolkit. The offer to support any other community wishing to develop similar programme remains.
- 3.5 It is acknowledged that there has been delayed progress in delivering specific cabinets under the Hampshire scheme. This has often been owing to the protected landscapes which exist within the forest. Both Councillors and Officers have worked hard to unblock these difficulties allowing improved services to be delivered to a number of rural communities.

- 3.6 There is no provision at present to require new build premises to install superfast and/or fibre to the premises. Whilst this feasible, it could not be implemented until Local Plan 2 stage and is therefore not deliverable in the immediate future.

#### **4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report

#### **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

#### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no existing crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

#### **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. The resulting work can be undertaken using existing networks and resources with the Economic Development Team.

#### **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 Broadband coverage for New Forest District is broadly on a par with the rest of Hampshire County in terms proportion of premises connected with superfast. Take-up of services provided varies greatly between areas within the district however.
- 8.2 Delivery of broadband improvements beyond the end of the existing programme remain unclear and as such there are currently no guarantees for those living in premises in the final 5%

#### **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 That New Forest District Council continues to support the work of Hampshire County Council and BT is developing the broadband network throughout the New Forest.
- 9.2 Support should continue to be provided for communities who wish to design and deliver their own private broadband schemes.

#### **Further information:**

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