BROADBAND UPDATE

1   Purpose

1.1   To update Scrutiny on the latest progress of Broadband installation across Aylesbury Vale.

2   Recommendations

2.1   That the committee notes the latest position relating to the installation of Broadband across Aylesbury Vale.

3   Supporting information

3.1   The Bucks-Herts Broadband Project involves the local management of the Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) procurement initiative, supported by central government, Buckinghamshire County Council, Buckinghamshire Thames valley Local Enterprise Partnership and the private sector. The intention is to provide next generation access (24 Mbps or more) to at least 90% of premises, with the remainder achieving the best possible speeds (greater than 2Mbps).

3.2   The Connected Counties partnership – made up of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire County Councils and BT – aims to bring high-speed fibre-optic broadband, to more than 90 per cent of homes and businesses in the two counties by the end of March 2016.

3.3   A total of £18.06 million is being invested in the Connected Counties programme. The Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) team have provided £4.15 million of funding which has been matched by the County Councils with Buckinghamshire contributing £3.7 million and Hertfordshire £1.61 million, including funding from the two Local Enterprise Partnerships. BT has contributed £8.6 million to the project. Public funds can only be spent in areas where there is no existing or planned fibre service delivery by any commercial supplier.

3.4   The Connected Counties programme is targeted with making fibre broadband available to over 90% of homes and businesses in Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire by April 2016. That's approximately 734,500 premises in total, 682,000 from BT's commercial deployments and 52,500 as a result of the Connected Counties programme.

3.5   The intention is to provide next generation access (24 Mbps or more). The programme also aims to ensure that everyone in the two counties has access to a minimum of 2 Mbps broadband speeds (fast enough to watch BBC iPlayer).

3.6   The project encompasses a wide variety of activity including demand stimulation, engagement with broadband suppliers to increase their service reach, digital inclusion, data analysis and marketing, building towards procurement and ultimate delivery.

3.7   The project has also supported the development of broadband pilots in strategic locations across the county where provision was substandard, local demand was great, and opportunities for investment in new technology was prevalent. This has enabled the broadband partnership to take a more informed view on improving connectivity, supporting community aspiration,

assessing technical performance and capabilities, as well as and gaining additional intelligence.

3.8 A programme of broadband activity is underway across Buckinghamshire to support the rollout of fibre broadband, benefitting businesses and communities alike. A large proportion of this is taking place across the Vale, in areas where existing speeds are poor and the demand for an improved service is tangible.

3.9 Rollout is well underway, seeking to ensure countywide fibre connectivity is extended to 90%+ of premises (business and residential). Telephone exchange areas that have been enabled thus far include locations in Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Stoke Mandeville, Stone, and Whitchurch.

3.10 Phase 1 includes 37 cabinets of which 25 are complete. This includes, Aylesbury, Aston Clinton, Waddesdon, Stone, Wendover and Stoke Mandeville. Phase 2 includes 38 cabinets of which 15 are complete. Phase 3 includes 43 cabinets and Phase 4 includes 12 cabinets.

3.11 The rollout is now moving towards Phase 3, which includes 43 cabinets, these telephone exchange areas in the Vale. This includes Brill, Buckingham, Finmere, Haddenham, Long Crendon, Steeple Claydon, Waddesdon and Winslow. These works are underway now and new services are expected to go 'live' by March 2015.

3.12 Looking ahead, many other telephone exchange areas across the Vale are expected to benefit, subject to successful survey and planning works. This includes (but not exhaustive) Cheddington, Eaton Bray, Grendon Underwood, Mursley, Soulbury, Stewkley and Wing. The rollout is due to be completed by March 2016.

3.13 The Connected Counties Programme has extended coverage to the Lillingstone Dayrell telephone exchange area. This was a collaborative effort with community representatives, securing additional funding to push fibre into a remote area of the Vale.

3.14 The Connected Counties rollout also has an emphasis on serving business/industrial park areas, where commercial fibre coverage has proven to be limited. This includes targeting areas in Aylesbury and Buckingham.

3.15 The rollout utilises Openreach's open access (wholesale network), ensuring consumer choice through a wide selection of retailer providers. Fibre to the Cabinet services can provide download speeds of up to 80 Mbps (upload 20 Mbps) dependent on a premise's distance from the fibre cabinet.

4   Other activity:

4.1 Superfast Extension Programme – the county is currently pursuing the opportunity to extend the reach of fibre broadband yet further, following the allocation of additional Government funding. This is currently subject to negotiations with District Councils and the Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Bucks TVLEP), given the requirement for local 'match' funds. If successful it is anticipated that new areas to benefit will be announced in the middle part of 2015. It is expected that this would have a significant impact on areas in the Vale that are currently not included in the Connected Counties rollout.

4.2 Engagement is continuing with broadband providers to attract further commercial investment into the county, so as to enhance coverage and meet the need for future demand. This is particularly true on new/planned

residential and commercial sites, where the opportunity to deliver the best broadband as the development is designed/built, exists.

4.3　The Broadband partnership is also working with mobile operators to identify opportunities to support 4G rollout in areas that currently have poor provision. This is in its infancy but is reflective of the potential for a wider mix of fixed and mobile superfast broadband, to support harder-to-reach areas in particular. Beyond this, Bucks TVLEP is seeking to secure 5G investment within the county.

4.4　Strategic lobbying is also a key activity, including the submission of a response to the Government's consultation on the development of a nation Digital Communications Strategy. We continue to reaffirm to Ministers the importance of digital infrastructure in relation to economic growth, job creation and global competitiveness, critical at a local level business prosperity and social equity.

5　Resource implications

5.1　None

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Background Documents