

CONNECTED COUNTIES BROADBAND

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide Economy Scrutiny Committee with an update on the latest progress with the Connected Counties Broadband Programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the information set out in the report and the presentation to be made at the meeting.

3 Supporting information

- 3.1 This broadband initiative is a central government scheme delivered by BDUK on behalf of the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS).
- 3.2 The Connected Counties programme has been operational since 2013 and the first phase of the roll out was funded by Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire and Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership. This helped to deliver an increased level of broadband coverage across the County from 72.4% in Q1 of 2013/14 to 88.3% by the end of the programme in March 2016. The breakdown of improvement across the district councils geography is as follows:

Table showing superfast (>24Mbps) coverage at the end of the financial year

District	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Aylesbury Vale	56.2%	78.1%	82.9%
Chiltern	88.1%	89.0%	92.3%
South Bucks	76.1%	81.6%	88.3%
Wycombe	80.9%	88.2%	90.9%

- 3.3 The take up rate from phase 1 of the programme has reached 50%, which is one of the highest take up rates across the UK. The benefit of a high take up rate is that there a gainshare arrangement in place for contract 1, which means that a proportion of funds are paid back to the original funders to reinvest back into the programme. For phase 1, the gain share total was £868k.
- 3.4 The second phase of the programme has seen a significant investment from the District Councils, in addition to further funds from BCC and BTVLEP. The total pot of funding for Phase 2 is £4,938,000. This is comprised of £100k from Chiltern DC, £860k from Wycombe DC, £400k from AVDC, £675k BTVELP and BDUK match funding of £2,035,000.
- 3.5 Members will recall that AVDC's contribution of £400k included a contribution of £147k from SEMLEP to support broadband delivery.

- 3.6 A total of 8 preference areas were identified by AVDC for the connected counties programme. They were: Ashendon, Aston Abbots, Bishopstone, Hardwick, Lillingstone Lovell, Thornton, Twyford and Wingrave with Rowsham.
- 3.7 Connected Counties and BT have carried out modelling over Buckinghamshire and a response was issued by BT on 17th March 2017. This was then evaluated by the Connected Counties Team and the Government Department that have overall responsibility for this programme and the contract has recently been signed.
- 3.8 Aylesbury Vale is expected to benefit from an increase in over 3,400 premises with better broadband and at last 2,300 of these accessing superfast broadband. This will increase fibre broadband coverage by 4.20% taking coverage to 97% by December 2019. Initial observations from the postcodes supplied shows that fibre deployment in this proposal will impact the following areas:

Aylesbury	Ford	Shalstone
Aston Abbots	Gawcott	Stoke Hammond
Aston Sandford	Halton	Stoke Mandeville
Barton Hartshorn	Hillesden Hamlet	Thornton
Berryfields	Little Tingewick	Upton
Boarstall	Long Crendon	Water Stratford
Brill	Maids Moreton	Wendover
Buckland	Newton Longville	Westbury
Dadford	Rabans Close	Wingrave
Dinton	Radclive	
Dunton	Rowsham	

- 3.9 The initial report from the Connected Counties team is that not all areas on our preference list have been included in the initial response but it is expected that there will be further contract amendments to reflect the fact that some areas included in the BT Connected Counties response have now been covered by other providers, which should mean we can look to prioritise any of the original preference areas that had not been covered.
- 3.10 Much of the coverage for the Vale is scheduled for implementation in the latter half of the programme ie from late 2018 onwards until the proposed end date of the programme in December 2019.
- 3.11 The Programme Manager responsible for the Connected Counties activity in Bucks will attend the meeting and give a brief presentation on the latest activity with the programme and respond to any queries from Members.

4 Resource implications

- 4.1 The funding for the delivery of the Connected Counties Programme has been met from an allocation of the New Homes Bonus, plus the contribution from SEMLEP.

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Background Documents None

