

Cherwell District Council

Executive

23 June 2014

Superfast Broadband

Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

To consider level of financial support to be provided for the roll out of superfast broadband across the District.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 To allocate £783,000 of the 2014-15 New Homes Bonus Allocation for Economic Development across the District.
- 1.2 Invest £500,000 for the provision of superfast broadband across the District.
- 1.3 To note that a further £500,000 will remain available to consider funding other solutions for the areas of the District not covered.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Council is working closely with the County Council who in turn are working closely with BDUK to increase the coverage of Superfast Broadband throughout the District.
- 2.2 A proposal has been received by the County Council which seeks to increase coverage across the County and for Cherwell will extend coverage to 95%. A briefing note from the County Council is attached at Appendix A which explains the current position.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 At the Executive meeting held on the 07 October 2013 it was confirmed that approximately £730,000 of New Homes Bonus should be held for Economic

Development activity across the District. If the 2014-15 allocation of New Homes Bonus is treated in a similar manner then there will be a balance of £1.5m. The Director of Resources and the Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy were also given delegated authority in consultation with the relevant Lead Members to allocate future allocations of New Homes Bonus but the opportunity is being taken as part of this report to seek Executive approval to the proposed allocation of the Economic Development element. Allocation of the remainder of the Year 4 New Homes Bonus sums will be allocated via the delegated authority.

- 3.2 The County Council is seeking to progress the roll out of Superfast Broadband across Oxfordshire and the briefing note detailed in Appendix A provides an update from the County Council on the project. The briefing note from the County Council sets out that the District can achieve 95% coverage by making a contribution of £500,000.
- 3.3 Of the funds set out in paragraph 3.1 it is recommended that £1.0m is notionally set aside to deal with maximising the level of Superfast Broadband coverage across the District. With the County needing £500,000 to achieve a coverage level of 95% the remaining £500,000 can be used to seek a solution for other parts not covered by the County Council project.
- 3.4 It should also be noted that the Cherwell contribution will extend the coverage to include rural business units.

Covering the last 5%

- 3.5 As detailed above and in Appendix 1 the £500,000 should move us to a position of 95% coverage across the District.
- 3.6 Providing Superfast Broadband coverage for the final 5% of the District will be more challenging.
- 3.7 However, there are already examples where innovators have sought solutions in hard to reach parts of the District using wireless technology and projects like this are positively supported by the Council.
- 3.8 The Council will work with providers, interested communities, parish councils and other organisations to achieve as close to 100% coverage as is possible with the remaining funds.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 It is recommended that £500,000 of the Economic Development element of New Homes Bonus is allocated for the County Council Superfast Broadband project.
- 4.2 It is recommended that a further £500,000 is allocated from the same funding stream to seek to address coverage in the remaining 5% of the District.

5.0 Consultation

Cllr Barry Wood

Is supportive of the recommendations

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To not invest £500,000 in the County Council's Superfast Broadband project and miss the opportunity to improve communication infrastructure across the District with the resultant impact on the local economy.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

- 7.1 By the end of 2013-14 there was £730,000 in the Economic Development allocation of New Homes Bonus.

A further £1.3m was received in New Homes Bonus in 2014-15 and of this amount £783,000 should be transferred into the Economic Development allocation giving funds totalling £1.513m.

Of this amount £1.0m should be allocated for Superfast Broadband with £500,000 being provided for the County Council solution to get the coverage across the District to 95% and the remaining £500,000 being held back to seek to improve coverage across the rest of the District.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

- 7.2 It is advisable to seek to ensure the optimum delivery of the Council's desired outcomes via entering into a formal funding agreement with the County Council if this is feasible.

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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: Yes

Community Impact Threshold Met: Yes

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Cherwell: A district of opportunity
Cherwell: Thriving Communities

Lead Councillor

Cllr Ken Atack

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
Appendix 1	Extending Superfast Broadband Coverage in Oxfordshire
Background Papers	
None	
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