

## Extending Superfast Broadband Coverage in Oxfordshire

### Executive Summary

This document is provided to describe the approach which the County Council would take if District Councils determine they wish to use our existing contract with BT. This is not a straightforward decision, and of course each stakeholder will determine their own path. However the County council team have gained significant domain knowledge from the delivery of the County programme, including significant engagement with other local body programmes, alternative technology providers, and of course BDUK.

The County Council is aware that alternative approaches are being considered by District Councils, notably the potential to fulfil the final 10% requirement by working in partnership with Cotswold Broadband, and whilst this document describes the County Council strategy, it in no way devalues the potential benefits such an approach may provide. Ultimately the decision is understood to be based on a conclusion of risk and reward which is for each District to determine

### Strategy – Key Principles

- Optimise all available match-funding
- Target coverage incrementally & strategically (ability to extend footprint)
- Reach 95% threshold as soon as possible
- Evaluate new technologies for final 5%
- Incorporate within existing delivery plan to optimise efficiency of deployment

### Considerations

- We have a defined solution against a defined cost to take coverage across the County to 95% (This is variable between 94% & 96% among the four Districts, and further detail is provided in the embedded documents below.)
- The delivery of this coverage can be incorporated within phases 4-6 of the existing County coverage plan, meaning Districts should see coverage against your direct investment within twelve months. The County plan will flex to accommodate this even if it means extending the delivery deadline of the County plan beyond Dec 2015. In this eventuality Oxfordshire will still maintain the stated objective of 90% coverage by this date, it will just be a different footprint incorporating District investment.
- In negotiation with BDUK, we have requested an increase in the SEP allocation from £2.15m to £2.55m. We have confidence this will be sanctioned.

- It is by no means clear that BDUK will be willing to administer multiple programmes within a County, meaning direct District access to SEP match-funding is not certain unless for example District councils form a consortium to apply for SEP funding as a single Local Body.
- The SEP at this point in time is focussed at achieving the target of 95% SFBB coverage. We don't know what might happen to any unused allocations.
- As a result of the SEP funding, each District can achieve the coverage already shared with each District, and embedded below, with half the investment you have identified as set aside for broadband, meaning each District could retain half their funding for extending coverage further.
- There may be an opportunity for each District to re-work modelled coverage within a limited parameter, for example to focus on certain locations, or business parks etc. However this would need to be decided quickly, and agreed with BDUK to ensure any such changes are still fully match-funded
- Discussions with alternative suppliers suggest there are good options to develop coverage using fixed wireless as an overlay to coverage to move beyond 95%. OCC has applied for a pilot of such in the County to be funded by the BDUK £10m Innovation Fund.
- Technologies are evolving (hence the Innovation Fund), meaning it may be a consideration to leave the final 5% challenge until these approaches have been tried and tested.
- The required organisational capacity and cost to procure, manage, report, evaluate, and administer these programmes should not be underestimated
- Delivery risk of alternative lower cost solutions must be squared against the relatively higher cost BT solution with blue chip commitment to not just deliver to target, but to operate the infrastructure for at least fifteen years

### Benefits Summary of utilising the existing contract

- We consider the optimum path for delivery is to split targets into defined phases (in line with BDUK targets). This should optimise current match-funding with a reasonable expectation that any retained funds might be able to attract any further central government money as match for the final 5%.
- This would mean each District committing one half of the funds set aside for broadband, into the BT contract, which will achieve full match-funding and achieve the modelled coverage shared with Districts. (OCC will willingly share all and any data for each District to fully understand local delivery).
- Each District retains the balance of funds available for broadband. The results of any pilots pursued by suppliers successful with Innovation Fund

applications will be shared with Districts and the County will offer any requested support to develop additional coverage beyond 95% by this means.

- Early delivery and minimal overhead costs for District Council to administer and manage the programme.