



**Prosperous Communities
Committee**

4th December 2018

Subject: Update on Broadband Matters Concerning West Lindsey

Report by:

Director of Resources

Contact Officer:

Officer name: Ian Knowles
Post title: Director of Resources
Telephone: 01427 675183
Email: Ian.Knowles@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

To provide an update on broadband matters concerning West Lindsey

RECOMMENDATION(S): Members are asked to:

- a. Support the budget and formal recruitment process to appoint to the post of Community Broadband Officer.
- b. Support the Council's on-going commitment to providing support for communities suffering from poor broadband services.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None

Financial: FIN/161/19/TJB

The overall cost of funding the post over the 3 year period will total £74,721 based on a 0.6 full time equivalent, Band 9 (subject to job evaluation), at the top of scale, including salary oncosts.

Costs in 2018/19 will be met from in year employee savings, and the future years budget will be included within the Medium Term Financial Plan (circa £25,000 p.a.)

Incidental costs of recruitment and redundancy, payable at the end of the fixed term period, will be met from existing budgets in year.

Staffing: This new post will be for a 3 year fixed term and will be subject to job evaluation.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: None

Risk Assessment: None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities: None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

[West Lindsey District Broadband Availability Issues](#)

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 5th June, this committee received a report setting out issues affecting the extent and quality of superfast broadband services across the District. The report also detailed initiatives in place to address such issues and also set out possible actions that the Council could take to support communities in need of improved broadband services.
- 1.2 The Committee determined that the following actions be progressed:
 - Adopt a 'sign-posting' stance for communities/residents to provide over view information and point enquiries toward the various available funding streams and options.
 - Look to employ, on a fixed term basis (possibly on a shared basis with other Lincolnshire Councils), a 'Broadband Community Champion' to work closely with relevant communities to identify issues, options, funding streams, garner community support/awareness, liaise with service providers and keep abreast of developments in this field.
 - Rely on OnLincolnshire Phase Three to deliver on behalf of the District and allow other initiatives (both planned and future) to address the issue.
- 1.3 A further action was posed by the Committee; this being to approach Quickline to work in the District as they had been awarded funding to pilot 5G technology.
- 1.4 This report therefore provides the Committee with an updated position since matters were last reported.

2. Community Broadband Officer

- 2.1 Enquiries were made with a number of other Lincolnshire authorities to test their appetite in creating this role on a shared basis. However, no agreement was received. Hence, work has progressed on writing a job description and person specification for the role of Community Broadband Officer, solely employed by West Lindsey District Council.
- 2.2 Details of the proposal have been shared with a small group representing communities currently in need of improved broadband services. The notion was well received, as the role was seen as being of use in supporting such communities in addressing their issues.
- 2.3 The Committee is therefore asked to support the formal recruitment process to appoint to the post of Community Broadband Officer. with the intention of appointing to the position as early as possible in the New Year.

3. OnLincolnshire Developments

- 3.1 The extent of the coverage of Phase 3 has yet to be determined. Recent information received from OnLincolnshire has advised that they have had to go back to BT to ask for re-modelling of a fibre to the cabinet solution for West Lindsey because the fibre to the premises solution they proposed would only cover 743 premises of the 3200 outstanding. However, the request for re-modelling will not be straightforward as unfortunately, Government has agreed to a BT proposal to not support any further fibre to the cabinet build on commercial viability grounds. OnLincolnshire therefore have to consider their next move.
- 3.2 However, BDUK has just been granted £200m by Treasury to expand rural broadband. OnLincolnshire are not yet sure how this will be allocated and are awaiting further instructions from BDUK. Any funds secured by OnLincolnshire would allow expansion to the fibre to the premises route. In addition, BDUK has just announced changes to the Gigabit Voucher Scheme (referred to in the previous report) and OnLincolnshire are being encouraged to engage with partners and providers to see how this might fit into bigger deployments.
- 3.3 With regard to 5G technology, OnLincolnshire have initiated a scheme where 5G fixed wireless providers can now use street furniture to expand broadband coverage. This is still in the trial phase, however the process does appear to work smoothly and OnLincolnshire are optimistic that as 4G and 5G accelerates, this initiative will encourage investment by providers across the county

4. Known Issues Across the District

- 4.1 The previous report advised that two recent housing developments in Cherry Willingham have not been supported with fibre broadband. Since that time discussions with residents, ward Members, OnLincolnshire and BT have resulted in both communities now progressing towards Community Fibre Partnership solutions, with 'make-up' funding provided by OnLincolnshire.
- 4.2 This is a positive outcome which should result in a significant number of properties receiving improved broadband access.

5. Community Broadband Group

- 5.1 As referred to in 2.2 above, a meeting has been held in August with a small group of representatives from communities that currently receive poor broadband/internet services.
- 5.2 A number of common issues were discussed and detail of initiatives in place were provided along with the aforementioned proposal for the

post of Community Broadband Officer.

- 5.3 The meeting was deemed to be worthwhile and informative. Further meetings will be held once definitive information has been received concerning the extent and roll-out of Phase 3 and its impact on these communities.

6. Village Hall Broadband

- 6.1 Under this banner, the Council has engaged under contract with Quickline for the past five years to provide broadband access to venues across the District. This provides such access to 41 venues. A number of additional venues have been identified as potentially suitable for connection.
- 6.2 The current contract expires in March 2019 and arrangements are currently underway to extend the contract for a further three years.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Members are asked to:
- a. Support the budget and formal recruitment process to appoint to the post of Community Broadband Officer.
 - b. Support the Council's on-going commitment to providing support for communities suffering from poor broadband services.