

Amendments to Minute No 50/14

Original Minutes	Amendments
<p>Ms Karen O’Kane (Norfolk County Council) updated Members on progress with Broadband since her initial presentation to Council.</p> <p>£12million of funding had been invested in improving coverage for Norfolk. Previously only 43% of commercial properties had access to Broadband. That figure was now 83% and was expected to rise to 92%.</p> <p>To provide additional coverage the District Councils in Norfolk had been invited to make a contribution which would be match funded by the Government. Five of the seven local authorities had done so, providing £3.2million which had been matched by the Government giving a total of £6.4million which would be spent in those five local authority areas only.</p> <p>Consultations had been carried out with the provider market aimed mainly at the infrastructure providers. No objections had been raised and therefore an Invitation to Tender had been issued on 22 August. It was hoped that the process would be complete by the New Year. After the contract had been completed British Telecom would be invited to discuss coverage of the areas that were still not served by Broadband and the costs of providing that coverage. It was expected that a decision would be taken in the summer of 2015 on which areas to progress.</p> <p>The Leader of the Council noted that Breckland had been the first District Council to contribute and they had given the most money. There had been a very short timescale to make that decision. Although the details of which areas would not be covered were not yet known, it was expected that about 8% of Norfolk would still be without Superfast Broadband. As there would not be an</p>	<p>£41million of funding is being invested in improving coverage for Norfolk. Previously only 43% of commercial properties had access to Broadband. That figure will rise to 83% by the end of 2015.</p> <p>A further £12 million will be invested via a second contract and coverage is expected to rise to approximately 90%.</p> <p>Although the details of which areas would not be covered were not yet known, it was expected that about 9% of Norfolk would still be without Superfast Broadband.</p>

opportunity to increase the amount for match funding at a later date the Council had made the decision to commit more money than the amount suggested to cover the eventuality that a higher percentage of those areas might be within the District.

From a Breckland Council perspective improved coverage gave residents the ability to run businesses from all areas and for school children to be able to do homework with access to the internet. The Government were encouraging people to do more on-line and many farmers did their returns in that way.

Councillor Kybird advised that many rural secondary schools had made the least improvements in GCSE results and that poor access to Broadband might be a factor.

In response to a question Ms O'Kane advised that about 8% of the Norfolk population worked from home. The Chairman thought that was an underestimate and that the actual figure was a lot higher. The estimate had been based on the number of business lines in use, but he knew of many small businesses which ran using residential lines. He was keen to understand how the decision would be made on which communities would benefit from the investment.

The Leader responded saying that unless there were technical reasons which prevented it the Council could make the decisions on where the money was spent. They would be difficult decisions and the aim would be to provide best value for money and to target business growth. Local knowledge of where businesses were located would be used to help make those decisions.

Ms O'Kane explained that the money had to provide an 'open service' and that people would have to contact their providers to get a package. A price war was likely and she thought that the cost

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This was a major factor in driving choice and value for money for customers . She

to individuals would probably stay the same. She also confirmed that future investment could be made but it would not be match funded by the Government.

The Chairman thanked Ms O'Kane for a very helpful and useful update.

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