

## **BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report of:** Michael Wassell, Leader of the Council

**To:** Cabinet - 5 January 2016

**(Author:** Karen O'Kane, Programme Manager at Norfolk County Council & Anna Graves, Chief Executive)

**Subject:** Better Broadband for Norfolk

**Purpose:** This report provides information on delivery of the first Better Broadband for Norfolk contract and potential steps towards achieving 95% coverage in Norfolk through a second contract, Super-Fast Extension Programme.

### **Recommendation(s):**

- 1) That Cabinet release funding of £950,000 for the Better Broadband for Norfolk Programme (Super-Fast Extension Programme) that was agreed in principle at Council on 17 July 2014. This funding will enable delivery of the programme and achieve 95% broadband coverage in Norfolk County.
- 2) That Cabinet agree to the concept of participating in the Satellite Voucher Scheme.

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) Programme is working to extend broadband coverage across Norfolk, beyond the reach of commercially funded deployments. This is being achieved using call-off contracts under the provisions of the national Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) Broadband Delivery Framework contract.
- 1.2 Using the national framework contract ensures compliance with European Union State Aid requirements and procurement legislation. It also provides an assurance regime that includes external scrutiny.
- 1.3 The BBfN has succeeded in significantly improving broadband coverage across Breckland. However as the Appendix A to this report makes clear 100% coverage is not yet possible. There may therefore be an opportunity for Breckland to supplement the BBfN Programme by establishing a Satellite Voucher Scheme to assist rural businesses that are in the final '5%' to access at least Basic Broadband, this is detailed in Appendix A.

### **2.0 OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Option 1 - Release the funding for the BBfN, Super-fast extension programme to enable delivery, which will contribute to 6% uplift in coverage in Breckland, taking Breckland to 94%. This is detailed in the table within Appendix A.
- 2.2 Option 2 - Do Nothing – Do not agree to release the funding then Breckland would remain at 88% coverage and would not benefit from the 6% uplift.

### **3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 Members will recall agreeing to a contribution of £950,000 to further extent broadband

coverage within the district, which was subject to being satisfied that value for money was achieved. Appendix A has been provided by the BBfN officer who will be attending the Cabinet meeting to answer any questions.

3.2 Every county's first contract included dedicated funding for a 'Phase 9' to meet the Government's commitment to offer at least a Basic Broadband speed of 2Mbps for every property.

3.3 The Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) team has been developing a single national Satellite Voucher Scheme which will be available in mid-December. The scheme will:

- Run for two years from December 2015 to December 2017
- Be available for premises that have access to speeds of less than 2Mbps, and where a fibre solution is not yet confirmed following survey
- The scheme will be accessible via the Better Broadband for Norfolk website. Eligible applicants will be issued with a subsidy code that can be used with a number of approved satellite providers

3.4 This is not intended as a substitute for Superfast Broadband, it is for those people who do not even have access to a Basic broadband speed. If a Superfast solution becomes possible it will be implemented.

#### 4.0 **EXPECTED BENEFITS**

4.1 Breckland District Council area will increase from 30% commercial coverage to 94% if District investment proceeds.

#### 5.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

##### 5.1 **Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues**

5.1.1 Increased online access to services will have a positive impact on carbon footprint as it will enable services to be accessed remotely in more cases.

##### 5.2 **Constitution & Legal**

5.2.1 The Council has been advised by Norfolk County Council that the BBfN Programme has already been through full procurement process and is fully compliant with state aid rules. As the funds have already been allocated by Council, and the proposal is within the policy framework, the decision to release the funds rests as an executive decision.

##### 5.3 **Contracts**

5.3.1 Better Broadband for Norfolk is a contractual agreement established through Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council is a signatory. The County Council has assured Breckland that it is compliant with state aid rules.

##### 5.4 **Corporate Priorities**

5.4.1 Supporting Breckland to develop and thrive

5.4.2 Providing the right services, at the right time and in the right way

5.4.3 Developing local economy to be vibrant with continued growth

5.4.5 Enabling stronger more independent communities

## 5.5 Financial

5.5.1 The Council's approved budget includes in principle funding of up to £950,000 for the Super-Fast Broadband project (agreed at Full Council July 2014).

The 'in principle' funding had 2 conditions attached:

- 1) Breckland's contribution is used as match funding
- 2) The spend allocation on roll out is agreed ahead with Breckland Council and is solely for spend within the District boundaries.

The funding can therefore be released for spend.

## 5.6 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales

5.6.1 To achieve the greatest efficiency implementation of SEP Part 1 and Part 2 will be managed as a single integrated deployment, although implementation timescales are yet to be confirmed, completion of the rollout may extend, possibly in to 2019. This is due to the scale of works required.

## 6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All wards are affected

## 7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN)

7.2 Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK)

7.3 Superfast Extension Programme (SEP)

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Background papers:- Broadband Breckland Investment Report – Council 17 July 2014

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### Lead Contact Officer

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**Key Decision:** Yes

**Exempt Decision:** No

### Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A – Better Broadband  
for Norfolk