

Cabinet Meeting Resolution

Executive
Forward Plan
Reference

E2369

(Rule 16) Improving access to superfast broadband in Bath and North East Somerset: the Broadband Delivery UK Opportunity

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| Date of Meeting | 11-Jan-12 |
| The Issue | <i>A Local Broadband Plan is required, to access funding from Government for bringing superfast broadband to 90% of all premises. A final plan must be agreed with the Government by the end of April. Somerset, Devon, North Somerset, Plymouth and Torbay Councils have a joint project called 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' which is open to B&NES to join. This report is being tabled under 'Special Urgency' measures (Rule 16) because: (1) the government has brought forward the deadline for submitting a Local Broadband Plan to end of February 2012; (2) the timetable for connecting with the 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' project; (3) the Capital expenditure must be signed off as part of the budget setting process by Council in February 2012.</i> |
| The decision | (1) To AGREE, subject to the normal Council capital expenditure decision making process, to enter into an agreement with Somerset County Council, Devon County Council, North Somerset District Council and Plymouth and Torbay Councils to undertake a joint bid for Broadband Delivery UK funding to provide at least 2 Mbps to 100% of premises and superfast broadband of at least 20 Mbps to 85% by 2015; As a result of which the Cabinet agrees: (a) To COMMIT to BDUK to undertake the works; (b) To AGREE to underwrite the BDUK allocation of £690,000; (c) To AGREE to meet the terms and conditions of the 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' programme; (d) To AUTHORISE capital expenditure of £475,000 and a potential call on capital contingency funds of a further £215,000 in accordance with (b) above; (e) To AGREE to use £179,000 of available ERDF funding to contribute to business support activities as part of the overall BDUK programme; (f) To DELEGATE authority to sign the programme agreement to the Strategic Director of Development and Major Projects in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Development; and (g) To COMMIT appropriate support from existing resources to meet the 'Connecting Devon and Somerset' project timetable. |
| Rationale for decision | In general, people living in our more rural areas are at a disadvantage due to the lack of planned broadband infrastructure upgrades. Improved broadband connectivity supports a diverse range of Council priorities, from supporting private sector jobs growth, to improving the independence of older people. Initiating work on a Local Broadband Plan with neighbouring authorities will allow the Council to better understand connectivity issues, and identify any potential costs associated with |

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| | delivering superfast broadband to premises not already receiving upgrades from BT. |
| Other options considered | <p>Do nothing: Should the Cabinet decide not to move forward with Local Broadband Plan work</p> <p>In this case, an opportunity will be lost to potentially access Government funding to deliver improved broadband services in our more rural areas. This option assumes that the private sector will deliver superfast infrastructure to more premises in B&NES not currently covered by current rollout announcements or that alternative technologies have the capacity to deliver.</p> |
| The Decision is made under the Special Urgency provisions in the Council's Constitution and is therefore not subject to Call-in | |