

Single Member Cabinet Decision

**Executive
Forward Plan
Reference**

E3501

ONE WORD 5G MOBILE NETWORK PILOT PROJECT

Decision maker	Cllr Roper, Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
The Issue	<p>B&NES currently lags behind regional and national comparators in terms of digital connectivity, and the city of Bath suffers from poor mobile connectivity, capacity, and not-spots, especially in “high demand” time periods.</p> <p>The ONE WORD 5G Mobile Network Pilot is funded by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology and grant funding has been offered to B&NES for £773k which the aim to improve connectivity and boost the local economy by providing a new cutting-edge mobile network directly in the historic centre of Bath.</p>
Decision Date	5th February 2024
The decision	<p>The Cabinet Member agrees that he will: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the ONE WORD 5G Mobile Network Project and approve Bath & North East Somerset’s role as a partner to deliver the project• Delegate approval to the Executive Director - Resources (S151) to enter into a grant funding agreement for £773k of government grant funding for the project.• Approve the installation of 5G apparatus on Council assets including Street Furniture such as CCTV and lighting columns• Fully approve capital budget of £773k funded by government grant to deliver the ONE WORD 5G Mobile Network Project
Rationale for decision	<p>There is currently a market failure in the mobile telecoms sector, with lack of investment from private telecoms companies which is exacerbated by UK Government restricting some international vendors. Additional challenges in the City of Bath are posed by its World Heritage Status and Georgian architecture, meaning the mobile connectivity, coverage and capacity is not at the required levels for a modern inclusive economic centre.</p> <p>B&NES also suffers from digital exclusion, with residents reporting coverage, cost, skills and confidence being barriers to accessing</p>

	<p>services and employment online¹. Digital exclusion is now one of the key work strands being picked up by the Future Ambitions Board.</p> <p>The Open Network Ecosystem (ONE) funding calls target investment in new next generation open mobile networks that multiple vendors can share in order to unlock innovation, boost connectivity and reduce digital and economic inequalities.</p> <p>This project and accompanying financial investment will fund staffing infrastructure to greatly improve Bath's mobile connectivity; if successful then future funding calls will be targeted to expand the network and serve areas outside of the city centre.</p>
Financial and budget implications	<p>£773k grant funding has been awarded to B&NES Council to deliver the ONE WORD 5G Mobile Network Pilot project. Costs are profiled into the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years and to be added to the capital programme for Digital B&NES as fully approved budget. Officer time from the Business & Skills, IT and Street Lighting teams will be charged to the project and will cover their time spent in helping to build out and set up the network. The Council will own the assets (small cells and fibre) to be purchased and installed to provide the 5G network.</p>
Issues considered	<p>Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Human Resources; Property; Young People; Equality (age, race, disability, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation);- Corporate; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations</p>
Consultation undertaken	<p>Cabinet colleagues; Other B&NES Services; Service Users; Stakeholders/Partners; Other Public Sector Bodies; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive;</p>
How consultation was carried out	<p>The residents Voicebox survey conducted by the Council has provided evidence that a significant proportion of residents cite connectivity issues as a barrier to accessing services online. As a result, B&NES Council has proactively sought funding and opportunities to improve connectivity for residents in the district.</p> <p>Additional consultation and engagement will take place following the approval of this Single Member Decision.</p>
Other options considered	<p>None</p>
Declaration of interest by Cabinet Member(s) for decision:	<p>None</p>
Any conflict of interest declared by anyone who is consulted by a Member taking the decision:	<p>None</p>

Name and Signature of Decision Maker/s	Cllr Paul Roper Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development
Date of Signature	5 th February 2024
Subject to Call-in until 5 Working days have elapsed following publication of the decision	

ⁱ Residents Voicebox Survey (2021, 2022)