REPORT TO:	**ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE**	**AGENDA ITEM: 5**
DATE OF MEETING:	**29TH JANUARY 2009**	**CATEGORY: DELEGATED**
REPORT FROM:	**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES**	**OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A**
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	**CHARLES JONES NIGEL GLOSSOP (EXT. 5703)**	**DOC:**
SUBJECT:	**REVIEW OF BROADBAND IN SOUTH DERBYSHIRE**	**REF:**
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	**ALL**	**TERMS OF REFERENCE: G**

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 That the Committee notes the work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.

1.2 That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to pursue British Telecom on the outstanding issues and receives periodic updates.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 To advise Members of the outcome of the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.

3.0 Detail

Background

3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had concerns that the broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire is inadequate, especially in rural areas, compared to other areas of the Country. The Committee wanted to investigate what plans British Telecom (BT) had in place to upgrade and develop the broadband infrastructure and how existing problems could be solved in South Derbyshire.

3.2 Two press releases were issued and can be seen via the following links: http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/news/information_superhighway.htm http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/news/Broadband+blues.htm. These asked the public to inform the Council of issues being experienced in South Derbyshire.

3.3 The target of the press releases was to highlight as many case studies as possible, so that these could be raised and discussed with BT. The more case studies available meant the more impact that could be had with BT on improving the broadband infrastructure.

3.4 It should be noted that each press release clearly stated that the Council can't help fix any problems already raised with a provider.

3.5 The reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7th May 2008, 25th June 2008 and the 17th September updated the Committee on the progress of the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.

Progress Since 17th September 2008

Case studies/comments

3.6 The Council continued to receive case studies/comments around broadband in South Derbyshire, although no further publicity requesting information has taken place. Up to the 30th of November the Council has received 134 case studies/comments on the broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire, all of a negative nature.

3.7 Tom Hamilton, the BT Regional Manager for the East Midlands, reviewed the case studies/comments sent to BT. BT's findings and the actions taken are outlined in the email in Appendix A.

3.8 Tom Hamilton has spoken to some of the people who raised case studies/comments and has resolved some specific issues relating to specific problems.

3.9 In summary, BT's response to the case studies/comments sent is as follows:

- BT has carried out extensive tests on the exchanges and line plant of the case studies. Results indicate that there are no service affecting issues either in the exchanges or in the line plant.
- BT's exchanges are enabled to provide up to 8 Mbit/s. However this speed is rarely achieved. The common problem for the majority of the case studies is the distance from the exchange. Unfortunately, the further away from the exchange the weaker the broadband signal is, so impacting the broadband speed available.
- Every broadband line is different and can be affected by a variety of additional factors e.g. internal wiring, interference from electrical appliances.

I-Plate

3.10 BT Wholesale has developed a self-install filter, called an I-Plate that filters out the electrical interference in the home caused by televisions, lighting and home wiring, which can often slow down an individual's broadband speed and affect the stability of their connection. By fitting an I-Plate to the master socket found in the majority of UK homes, in most cases, customers should experience some broadband performance benefits. See http://www.pcpro.co.uk/news/177375/the-10-device-that-could-rescue-your-broadband-connection.html for more information.

3.11 The I-Plate potentially costs around £10, although the exact charging mechanism used has yet to be decided. Tom Hamilton has been approached to see if some of these devices can be supplied free of charge to enable their effectiveness in the South Derbyshire area to be determined.

Planned Infrastructure Improvements

3.12 BT has again stated its intentions to improve broadband across the country (e.g. introduction of fibre from exchanges to cabinets subject to some regulatory revisions by OFCOM to serve 40% of premises, and the continued roll out of ADSL2+) and how this would impact South Derbyshire.

3.13 The Council is working with BT to try to ensure that at least Swadlincote and Mickleover exchanges will be in the first 40% of exchanges to be converted to fibre by 2012.

3.14 Improved broadband services to customers in other parts of South Derbyshire (e.g. Etwall, Repton, Overseal, etc..) may be delivered by fibre or other alternative technologies after 2012, dependent upon either the continuation of commercially based services roll out or some intervention scheme yet to be determined.

Conclusion

3.15 The review of broadband in South Derbyshire has achieved the following:

- Raised the profile of South Derbyshire with BT relating to the Customers view that the broadband service in the area is poor.
- The number of case studies/comments clearly demonstrated to BT that a problem exists in South Derbyshire. The number was sufficient to get BT to review the exchanges and line plant in our area, although no issues were found.
- Potentially moved the exchanges serving South Derbyshire higher up the priority list for upgrade to fibre.
- Enabled South Derbyshire residents, who raised case studies/comments, to discuss their individual problems, with Tom Hamilton the Regional Sales Manager for the East Midlands.

3.16 However, in some of the rural areas of South Derbyshire the broadband speed available is poor or broadband is unavailable. BT's plans, as described in this report, will not solve these issues and therefore citizens will still encounter broadband problems in rural areas.

3.17 A further email will be sent to the people who raised case studies/comments describing the actions taken by BT and their future plans.

3.18 A press release will be made to highlight the impact that the lobbying carried out by South Derbyshire District Council has had with BT.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None arising directly from this report.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The review of broadband in South Derbyshire clearly fits in with two of the Themes in the corporate plan.

- Theme 5 Rural South Derbyshire
- Theme 6 Strong in the Region, Lobbying on issues affecting South Derbyshire.

6.0 Background Papers

6.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7th May 2008, 25th June 2008 and the 17th September updated the committee on the progress of the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.