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| REPORT TO: | OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE | AGENDA ITEM: 6 |
| DATE OF MEETING: | 24TH MARCH 2010 | CATEGORY: DELEGATED |
| REPORT FROM: | DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES | OPEN PARAGRAPH NO: N/A |
| MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT: | Nigel Glossop (595703) | DOC: PDS |
| SUBJECT: | BROADBAND | REF: |
| WARD(S) AFFECTED: | ALL | |

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the ongoing work carried out in trying to improve the broadband infrastructure across South Derbyshire.
- 1.2 That the Council continues to raise the profile of South Derbyshire, within BT / Openreach and other relevant organisations, in relation to the poor broadband service that is available in many parts of the District.
- 1.3 That the Council investigates other methods of external funding for broadband infrastructure improvements. This would include working with other Councils across Derbyshire and the East Midlands to endeavour to improve the broadband infrastructure in the area.
- 1.4 That appropriate steps are put in place in the Local Development Framework to ensure that an appropriate telecoms / broadband infrastructure is available for South Derbyshire.
- 1.5 That a recommendation is made to Environmental and Development Services Committee that for new property developments, that developers should be required to ensure the required telecoms / broadband infrastructure is put in place, with negotiation with BT / Openreach or other appropriate Supplier.
- 1.6 That the issue of the overall poor broadband infrastructure in the District is raised through Overview and Scrutiny at a County level.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To advise Members of the ongoing work carried out on the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.
- 2.2 The report summarises the discussions and subsequent conclusions following the presentation given by BT / Openreach on the 25th January 2010.

3.0 Detail

Background

- 3.1 In 2008 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee carried out a review in relation to the broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire.
- 3.2 The reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7th May 2008, 25th June 2008, and 17th September 2008 detail the findings and outcomes of the 2008 review.
- 3.3 Tom Hamilton the BT Regional Sales Manager for the East Midlands gave a presentation in May 2008 defining BT's future plans for the broadband infrastructure across South Derbyshire.
- 3.4 In summary the review of broadband in 2008 in South Derbyshire achieved the following:
 - Raised the profile of South Derbyshire within 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.
- 3.5 Paul Bimson from BT (the Regional Partnership Director for the East Midlands) and Carl Gange (from Openreach) gave a presentation, on the 9th December 2009, on the current situation and the future plans for broadband in South Derbyshire.
- 3.6 From a Council perspective the information presented on the 9th December 2009 did not answer the questions around broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire.
- 3.7 Further to the publicity surrounding the Councils efforts to improve the broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire Councillor Amy Plenderleith and Head of IT Services, Nigel Glossop, were invited to the House of Lords on the 18th January to discuss the issues around broadband in the District.
- 3.8 A further update report was given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 20th January 2010.
- 3.9 At the House of Lords meeting BT / Openreach agreed to carry out a review of the current infrastructure in South Derbyshire, specifically around the Etwall Exchange which covers the Hilton area.
- 3.10 The press release entitled "Broadband Fight Continues" on the 26th January 2010 summarises the details of the House of Lords meeting. This is available at http://www.south-derbys.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_news/january_2010/news_items/broadband_and_fight_continues.asp

- 3.11 Further to the House of Lords meeting, BT / Openreach agreed to come to South Derbyshire District Council to discuss the areas broadband infrastructure issues and to present the findings of their review of the Etwall Exchange.
- 3.12 Casey Balkham (Openreach Head of Regional Public Policy and Engagement), Steve Askew (Openreach General Manager, East Midlands), Paul Bimson (BT Regional Partnership Director for the East Midlands), Councillor Charles Jones, Councillor Heather Wheeler, Councillor Amy Plenderleith and Head of IT Services Nigel Glossop attended the meeting. Before the start of the meeting Frank McArdle discussed with the representatives from BT / Openreach the importance of having an effective broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire.

Conclusions/Actions from presentation/discussion

- 3.13 The amount of information that BT / Openreach is willing to share is limited as they consider it to be commercially confidential. Any information that was given by BT / Openreach was done on the understanding the Council would not share this information any further.
- 3.14 The majority of the questions asked by the Council could not be answered as BT / Openreach considered the information to be to commercially confidential.
- 3.15 Details of the exchanges covering South Derbyshire are shown in Appendix A – Openreach coverage. The circles around the exchanges show distances of 2km and 4km. The further a property is away from an exchange directly relates to the broadband speed achievable. If a property is over 4km from an exchange then this is likely to provide poor broadband speed. BT / Openreach consider the coverage in South Derbyshire to be appropriate for the area.
- 3.16 South Derbyshire is no different to other areas in the Country. The infrastructure in place is comparable to other locations with a similar topography.
- 3.17 The information that BT / Openreach holds about their assets (such as the green cabinets) appears to be different in some cases to what is actually on the ground. Steve Askew will investigate further and find out why discrepancies occur.
- 3.18 BT / Openreach provided examples of Kent and Hampshire County councils who have improved the broadband infrastructure in their areas. Contact details have been provided so that the Council can investigate how funding was achieved and if such projects could be carried out in South Derbyshire.
- 3.19 Paul Bimson will look into the contention ratio at the Etwall Exchange and to see if this is causing any specific issues for customers.
- 3.20 The Council should engage with Communication Providers, who are active in the local area, to determine if improvements can be made.
- 3.21 That the Council should encourage housing developers to discuss and negotiate with BT / Openreach about Telecoms infrastructure issues before development begins.
- 3.22 Further issues with the broadband infrastructure in the District are still being introduced, as in many cases the appropriate infrastructure is not being put in place when new properties are being built.

3.23 Housing developers should be encouraged to put in the appropriate infrastructure when building work is taking place, as it is more cost effective and easier to do at this point. The developers should be encouraged to contact BT / Openreach to discuss the optimum way forward around telecoms infrastructure. As planning at that point could save considerable time, effort and cost in the future.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None arising directly from this report.

5.0 Background Papers

5.1 The reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 7th May 2008, 25th June 2008, 17th September 2008 and the 10th December 2009 detail the findings and outcomes of the 2008 review.

5.2 The reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9th December 2009 and 20th January 2010 details the ongoing work carried out.