

REPORT TO:	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM:
DATE OF MEETING:	7TH MAY 2008	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: N/A

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Committee notes the work carried out on the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.
- 1.2 That the Committee notes the initial feedback resulting from the press release "Broadband Blues".

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To advise Members of the work carried out on the review of broadband in South Derbyshire.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee have 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) have in place to upgrade and develop the broadband infrastructure and how existing problems can be solved in South Derbyshire.

Background

- 3.2 BT is made up of a number of separate organisations. One part of BT handles the infrastructure that the majority of service providers (such as AOL, Eclipse, Bulldog, etc.) use to deliver broadband in South Derbyshire. Another stand alone part of BT is a service provider. It should be noted that the service provider part of BT has no competitive advantage over any of the other service providers, it is considered to be a separate company.

3.3 Problems with the existing BT infrastructure occur in two areas:

- Not able to access broadband (e.g. infrastructure not compatible or line sharing services in place).
- Speed and continuity of service.

3.4 Broadband speed and continuity is impacted by a wide variety of factors, often unique to a location. The main factors are:

- Distance from the exchange
- Contention Ratio (the number of people sharing the same connection)
- Time of day (peak time is 18:00 to 23:00)
- Quality of modem and internal cables
- Quality of external cables
- Capacity of a website that is being looked at

BT Presentation

3.5 To address the issues above Tom Hamilton, BT Regional Manager for the East Midlands, attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 13th February 2008 and gave the presentation “A Network for the 21st Century – BT infrastructure, applications and services” (see Appendix A).

3.6 This presentation outlined the BT organisation and the current infrastructure and plans for improvement in South Derbyshire.

3.7 In his presentation Tom Hamilton stated:

- All 8 exchanges in South Derbyshire are broadband enabled with a maximum speed of 8Mb
- Only 90 properties, out of approximately 42,000, in South Derbyshire are unable to receive broadband (0.002%).
- 29% broadband take up in Derbyshire compared to a national figure of 29.9%.
- BT will always send out an engineer to try and make broadband work.
- Broadband speed in South Derbyshire

Line Rate	Percentage of lines
0.5Mb	98%
1Mb	96%
2Mb	93%
3Mb	89%
4Mb	78%
5Mb	63%
6Mb	42%
> or = 6.5Mb	25%

Note: The figures are based on telephone checker data and estimates only.

3.8 Members then had the opportunity to ask specific questions on broadband issues.

3.9 Tom Hamilton was also available after the meeting to continue answering any specific questions from Members. He stated that he would investigate further the incidents raised and get back to the Member who raised the issue.

Overview and Scrutiny 26th March 2008

- 3.10 At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting on the 26th March 2008 the presentation from Tom Hamilton was further debated. It was felt that the information given was contradictory to what the public and businesses of South Derbyshire are experiencing.
- 3.11 Therefore a press release entitled "Broadband Blues" was issued by the Council (see Appendix B) asking that the public and businesses contact the Council, by the end of May 2008, to describe the problems they are experiencing with broadband. The press release received considerable media coverage on the radio (BBC Radio Derby and Touch FM), the local press (Derby Evening Telegraph and Burton Mail), nationally on the internet (see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/derbyshire/7351155.stm> and <http://www.uswitch.com/news/broadband/20080421/poor-broadband-seen-in-derbyshire.cmsx>) and has provoked discussion on a variety of internet forums.
- 3.12 The target of the news release was to highlight as many case studies as possible so that these can be raised and discussed with BT. The more case studies available means the more impact that can be had with BT on improving the broadband infrastructure.
- 3.13 It should be noted that the news release clearly stated that the Council can't help fix any problems already raised with a provider.
- 3.14 Additionally, to encourage more case studies especially from rural areas the Parish Councils in South Derbyshire have been contacted and asked to provide further case studies.
- 3.15 Up to the 21st of April 2008 the Council has received 25 case studies/comments on the broadband infrastructure in South Derbyshire, all of a negative nature.
- 3.16 All the case studies reported will be presented to BT, via Tom Hamilton, in June 2008. Feedback will then be given to all individuals and businesses that have supplied information to the Council.

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 Previous Committee discussions.