

Overview & Scrutiny AGENDA



THE PUBLIC MAY ATTEND THIS MEETING

Please note this meeting will be audio recorded.

Date: Wednesday, 13th July 2016

Time: 7.15pm

**Venue: Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,
Bocking End, Braintree, Essex, CM7 9HB**

Membership:

Councillor C Bailey	Councillor G Maclure
Councillor Mrs M Cunningham	Councillor R Ramage
Councillor J Goodman	Councillor F Ricci
Councillor P Horner	Councillor V Santomauro
Councillor D Hufton-Rees	Councillor P Schwier
Councillor D Mann (Vice Chairman)	Councillor C Siddall (Chairman)

Invitees: Councillor S Canning, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group to present item 5.

Members are requested to attend this meeting, to transact the following business:-

PUBLIC SESSION

Page

1 **Apologies for Absence**

2 **Member Declarations**

1. To declare the existence and nature of any interests relating to items on the agenda having regard to the Code of Conduct for Members and having taken appropriate advice (where necessary) before the meeting.
2. To declare the existence and nature of any instruction given by or on behalf of a political group to any Councillor who is a member of that group as to how that Councillor shall speak or vote on any matter before the Committee or the application or threat to apply any sanction by the group in respect of that Councillor should he/she speak or vote on any particular matter.

(See paragraph below)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8th June 2016 (copy previously circulated).

4 - 19

20 - 29

- Membership of Task and Finish Group in to Obesity in the District
- Update on Task and Finish Group Review of Bus and Community Transport Services in the Braintree District

Agenda

To consider the Decision Planner for the period 1st August 2016 to 30th November 2016 (previously circulated).

To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

To agree the exclusion of the public and press for the consideration of any items for the reasons set out in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.
At the time of compiling this agenda there were none.

To consider any matter which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered in private by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

E WISBEY
Governance and Member Manager

Contact Details

If you require any further information please contact the Governance and Members team on 01376 552525 or e-mail demse@braintree.gov.uk

Question Time

Immediately after the Minutes of the previous meeting have been approved there will be a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak.

Members of the public wishing to speak should contact the Council's Governance and Members team on 01376 552525 or email demse@braintree.gov.uk at least 2 working days prior to the meeting.

Members of the public can remain to observe the whole of the public part of the meeting.

Health and Safety

Any persons attending meetings at Causeway House are requested to take a few moments to familiarise themselves with the nearest available fire exit, indicated by the fire evacuation signs. In the event of a continuous alarm sounding during the meeting, you must evacuate the building immediately and follow all instructions provided by a Council officer who will identify him/herself should the alarm sound. You will be assisted to the nearest designated assembly point until it is safe to return to the building.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that your mobile phone is switched to silent during the meeting.

Comments

Braintree District Council welcomes comments from members of the public in order to make its services as efficient and effective as possible. We would appreciate any suggestions regarding the usefulness of the paperwork for this meeting, or the conduct of the meeting you have attended.

Please let us have your comments setting out the following information

Meeting Attended..... Date of Meeting.....

Comment

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Contact Details:

Task and Finish Group Review in to Apprenticeships in the Braintree District		Agenda No: 5
Portfolio	Economic Development	
Corporate Outcome:	A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities	
Report presented by:	Councillor S Canning, Chairman Task and Finish	
Report prepared by:	Group Nathan Rowland, Economic Development	
Background Papers:	Public Report	
None	Key Decision: No	
Executive Summary:		
<p>In 2015/2016 a Task and Finish Group of Braintree District Councillors was formed to explore the current state of apprenticeships in the district and make recommendations to the Council going forward. The Task and Finish Group met with apprentices from the Council, from outside organisations and gathered evidence of companies and partners across the district.</p> <p>Members are asked to consider the Task and Finish Report and the recommendations to Cabinet contained therein. The recommendations are set out in the recommended decision box of this covering report.</p>		
Recommended Decision:		
<p>To consider and refer the Task and Finish Groups' scrutiny review report into Apprenticeships to Full Council on 5th September 2016 and to Cabinet on 29th November 2016.</p> <p>As a result of the Task and Finish Group's review into Apprenticeships the following recommendations are made:</p>		
<p>1. Businesses need help to understand and navigate the apprenticeship process. Work with the Essex Skills Board and Training providers to produce a simple checklist or process chart for businesses.</p> <p>2. Businesses need to understand the business case for taking on an apprentice. Use positive case studies from companies in the local area to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to other businesses and encourage them to "Grow Your Own Talent".</p>		

- 3. Transport can be a major barrier for young people accessing apprenticeships.**
Explore options including, Community Transport, which could be used to help address this situation.
- 4. Agencies need to work together to address issues affecting apprenticeships.**
The Essex Skills Board needs to take a lead in pulling together agencies across the district to promote apprenticeships.
- 5. The Council should investigate establishing an apprenticeship agency.**
The Council should look into establishing an apprenticeships agency, which would act a central pool of apprentices recruited and hired by the Council to then be “hired out” to businesses.

Purpose of Decision:

To enable the Committees’ report to be referred to Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.

Financial:	None arising out of this report.
Legal:	None arising out of this report.
Safeguarding:	None arising out of this report.
Equalities/Diversity:	None arising out of this report.
Customer Impact:	None arising out of this report.
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising out of this report.
Consultation/Community Engagement:	As set out in the report.
Risks:	None arising out of this report.
Officer Contact:	Nathan Rowland
Designation:	Economic Development Officer
Ext. No:	2585
E-mail:	nathan.rowland@braintree.gov.uk

TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT APPRENTICESHIPS IN BRAINTREE DISTRICT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June 2015 the Government announced its commitment to create 3 million new apprenticeships by 2020, and to *“strengthen their reputation, help working people and ensure apprenticeships are recognised as a career path equal to higher education.”*¹

In July 2015, a review of Apprenticeships was added to the Council's Scrutiny Committee's work programme in order to review the following:

1. The take up of apprenticeships in the District relative to:
 - i) Other Essex Districts & Boroughs
 - ii) Essex County Council figures
 - iii) National averages
2. Barriers to employers in taking on apprentices:
3. Barriers to individuals in accessing apprenticeships
4. The District Council role in promoting apprenticeships

A Task and Finish Group of Braintree District Councillors was formed to explore the current state of apprenticeships in the district and make recommendations to the Cabinet going forward. The Task and Finish Group met with apprentices from the Council, representatives from outside organisations offering apprenticeships and gathered evidence from companies and partners across the district.

This report sets out the work undertaken and the recommendations put forward by this Task and Finish Group.

2. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Task and Finish Group would like to thank the following people and organisations for supporting the work of this review:

- Braintree District Council's current and former apprentices
- Colchester Institute
- Essex County Council Employment & Skills Unit
- Milbank Concrete, Earls Colne
- Maycast-Nokes, Halstead
- Village Glass, Witham
- Local Schools

¹ Nick Boles MP, Department for Business, Innovation & Skills - [Government kick-starts plans to reach 3 million apprenticeships](#) - 14 June 2015

3. BACKGROUND

The Braintree District has plans for significant economic growth. Residents and businesses can welcome an array of exciting new opportunities arising within the district, including the development of 14,000 new houses and 20,000 new jobs by 2033.

Braintree is also at the heart of a global economy within greater Essex. It is home of large global businesses and has excellent road, sea and air travel links allowing businesses to access a range of markets including Cambridge, London and Europe. Data highlights Braintree as a well-established district for construction, manufacturing and technology.

With the Government's target of delivering 3 million new apprenticeship starts by 2020 and the planned introduction of an "Apprenticeship Levy" on large employers, apprenticeships will become an increasingly important means of delivering the skilled workforces in the future. Despite increasing media attention and promotion by both national and local agencies, it is clear that there are still gaps in understanding and negative perceptions about status and quality of apprenticeships which will need to be addressed if the government's ambitions are to be met.

4. AN OVERVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS

As starting point the Task and Finish Group first sought to gain a greater understanding about what apprenticeships actually are and how they work. Staff from Colchester Institute, Essex County Council Employment and Skills Unit, and Braintree District Council's Learning and Development Consultant attended a meeting with Members to help answer the following questions:

What are Apprenticeships?

An apprenticeship is a paid job which provides training and work experience leading to a nationally recognised qualification.

Learners earn money whilst also gaining a nationally recognised qualification in over 170 Industries including ICT, engineering, construction, accountancy and public services and in 1,500 job roles.

Apprenticeships take between one and four years to complete and are now available up to degree level and beyond. The Apprenticeship equivalence levels are set out below.

Apprenticeship Level	Equivalent to...
Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2)	5 A*-C GCSEs
Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3)	2 A Levels
Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4 & 5)	Higher national Diploma or Foundation Degree
Higher Apprenticeships (Level 7)	Master's degree

How much are Apprentices paid?

Apprentices aged under 19 years old, or in the first year of their apprenticeship can be paid the “Apprentice Minimum Wage” of £3.30 per hour. After this the standard national minimum wage levels will apply.

Employers can choose to top-up apprenticeship wages however the costs must be covered by the employers directly.

Apprentices are also entitled to sickness and holiday pay as well as time off for study as agreed with their employer and training provider.

Who can take part up an Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are open to anybody who is:

- Aged 16 or over (there is no upper age limit)
- Living in England
- Not in full-time education at the point of starting their apprenticeship

As well as the criteria set out above, apprentices can also be existing staff within a company, who are undertaking an in-work qualification within the National Apprenticeship Framework.

Students can apply for an apprenticeship whilst still in full time education, so long as their Apprenticeship commences after they have completed their current programme of study.

How are Apprenticeships funded?

The Skills Funding Agency provides financial support of £1,500 per apprentice aged 16-24 years old, for employers who meet the following criteria:

- Have fewer than 50 employees,
- who are new to apprenticeships
- or haven't enrolled a new recruit or existing employee onto an Apprenticeship programme in the previous 12 months.

Employers can be paid up to 5 grants in total.

The Apprenticeship Levy

In April 2017 the government will introduce a new Apprenticeship Levy which will change the way that apprenticeships are funded nationally.

This scheme will require employers with an annual pay bill of over £3 million to contribute to a new apprenticeship levy, at a rate of 0.5% of their annual pay bill. All employers that are required to pay the levy will be entitled to an offset allowance of £15,000 per year.

All employers (including those who do not pay the levy) will then be able to access funding for apprenticeships through a new digital apprenticeship service account which they can pay for training and assessment for apprentices.

5. HOW DOES THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT COMPARE TO OTHER AREAS?

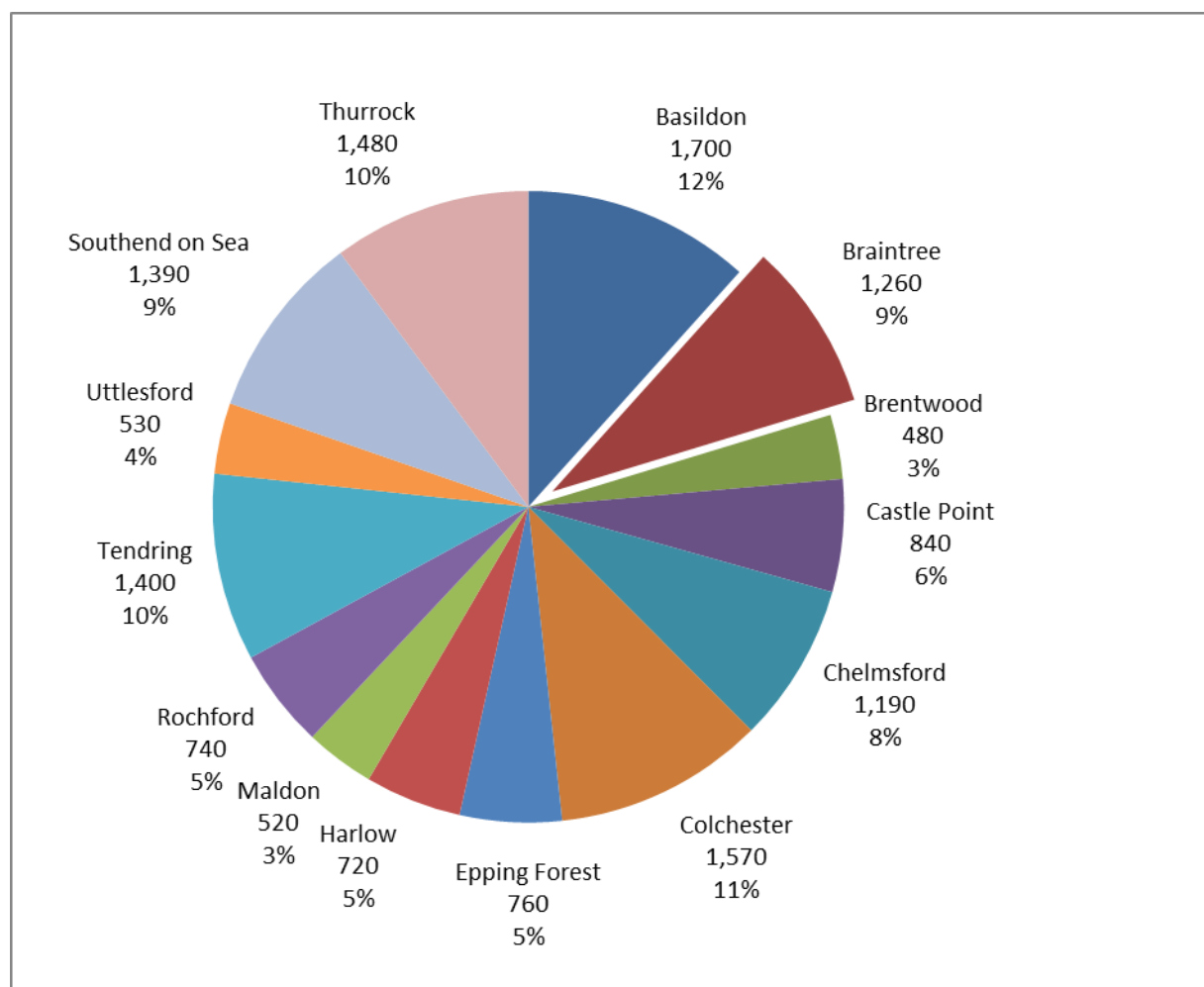
According to data from the Skills Funding Agency and Essex County Council, there were 1,260 new apprenticeship starts in the Braintree District in 2014/15.

This accounts for just over 10% of apprenticeship starts in the Essex County Council area and is the 4th highest of all districts and boroughs. This is also approximately 9% of all apprenticeships in the Greater Essex area (including Southend and Thurrock)

The table and charts below provide further detail on the level of apprenticeships:

Braintree apprenticeship starts:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Braintree	1,390	1,140	1,260
Essex	11,760	10,390	11,710
South East Region	68,960	60,220	65,030
Essex Apprenticeship Programme	121	56	57



Apprenticeship starts in Greater Essex – 2014/15 – Source: Skills Funding Agency

6. NATIONAL WORK & OTHER RESEARCH

The Task and Finish Group also undertook a literature review of other research into apprenticeships undertaken by outside organisations and by other Braintree District Council Groups and Committees. The findings are summarised below:

The Richard Review (2012)

Between June and November 2012, business owner Doug Richard undertook an independent review of apprenticeships on behalf of the Government. The research carried out as part of this review involved a range of stakeholders including business owners, apprentices and other stakeholders resulted in a large number of recommendations which have subsequently informed revisions to the Government's Apprenticeship policy.

The Richard review highlighted that despite an overwhelmingly positive reaction to apprenticeships from all involved in the review, many school leavers do not consider apprenticeships as an option. Chapter seven of the Richard Review focussed specifically on boosting demand and awareness with participants citing five main factors holding back demand for apprenticeships.

1. **Getting the apprenticeship product right** – *“many employers argued that this is currently being hampered, with apprenticeship standards and quality of training too low.”*
2. **Negative perceptions compared to higher education** - *“A relative lack of demand from more highly qualified school leavers, who are being attracted into Higher Education instead, impacts significantly on employers' appetite for taking on apprentices.”*
3. **Difficulties for employers in navigating the apprenticeship system** – *“a serious barrier expressed by many was the sheer complexity - both in terms of the number of bodies involved in the current system and, more commonly cited, the issues around access to apprenticeships and the perceived lack of a single point of contact.”*
4. **Perceived poor quality** – *“driven by some poor providers who either have no relevant curriculum or, as cited in previous sections, focus on driving 'easy to deliver' units rather than products directly relevant to employers.”*
5. **Lack of impartial advice available** – *“the most commonly cited barrier to demand for learners was the perceived lack of impartial, information and advice, which includes information on apprenticeships, available to all learners, especially though not exclusively at school, and offered early enough to inform subject choices at GCSE”*

The review looked at both concluded that there was still further work to be done to boost numbers of both employers and learners engaging with Apprenticeships although concluded that more work is needed to raise take up from on the learner side. Richard notes that

“The number of apprenticeship places has already increased considerably – but the pace of learner demand has not been matched by employers' willingness to hire them as apprentices, especially for the younger age group. Employer demand therefore is correctly a key focus, but learner demand is an

important challenge which must not be overlooked – while overall it is strong, this conceals considerable variations, with too few young people, and particularly too few of the most capable young people, informed about and choosing apprenticeships.”

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf

***Creating an inclusive Apprenticeship Offer –
Department of Business Innovation and Skills (2012)***

The report “Creating an inclusive Apprenticeship Offer” commissioned by the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (2012) set out key advice and guidance relating to the take up of Apprenticeship by people with learning difficulties/disabilities and/or behavioural or mental health problems. This report notes the following:

“Success rates for those with mental ill health, emotional/behavioural difficulties, multiple learning difficulties and moderate learning difficulties are consistently lower than other groups and there should be a focus on supporting these groups to achieve in line with their peers.”

“there is cause for concern among specific groups. Both the numbers and proportion of Apprentices declaring a moderate learning difficulty for example have fallen significantly as have those with visual impairments and multiple disabilities.”

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/387040/AU-CreatingAnInclusiveApprenticeshipOffer-Report-May2012.pdf

Skills Funding Agency Equality and Diversity Good Practice Fund

The Skills Funding Agency operates the equality and diversity good practice fund provides grants to Skills Funding Agency-funded providers to promote apprenticeships to under-represented groups. Examples from the National Apprenticeship Service include:

- Newcastle City Council and Twisting Ducks produced a [film-based toolkit](#), to raise awareness about the benefits of apprenticeships and traineeships for learners with learning disabilities.
- Prostart Training’s [Passport to Success programme](#) addressed the under-representation of men on Business Administration apprenticeships by giving one-to-one sessions on employability and interview skills.
- Realise Futures’ [Mind the Gap project](#) addressed the under-representation of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) apprentices in the context of skills, enterprise and employability, and worked with businesses to promote the benefits of a diverse workforce.
- National Star College’s [WorkAble project](#) addressed barriers faced by people with disabilities who wish to work, train in the workplace or carry out work experience by supporting employers to become disability confident.

Further examples are also available at <http://equalitytoolkit.com>

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/E-and-D-Good-practice-fund-prospectus.pdf>

Learning a Living – Working Links 2012

This report was published at the peak of national youth unemployment explores ways in which apprenticeships could be used to tackle the youth unemployment crisis. As part of this report the authors identified a number of barriers which they considered were preventing apprenticeships from being open to all young people. Recommendations from this report on how to tackle these barriers included:

- More government funded pre-Apprenticeship places;
- Improved promotion of Apprenticeships to young people;
- Encourage more effective business to business advocacy of the benefits of Apprenticeships to employers.
- Training providers improving low levels of literacy and numeracy that employers feel are an issue for some young people – but not at the expense of the soft skills employers also value;
- Place a statutory obligation on schools to teach employability skills through the mainstream curriculum;
- Place a legal duty on schools to explain the full educational offer (including Apprenticeships) available to young people of all abilities;

<http://www.workinglinks.co.uk/pdf/Learning%20a%20Living.pdf>

Braintree District Council Scrutiny Review of NEETS 2013/14

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook an Overview and Scrutiny Review of NEETs in 2013/2014 to examine how the Council could support young people into work. Key conclusions from that work relevant to this task and finish group were the need to:

- Raise business awareness of the National Apprenticeship Service support programme for apprenticeships.
- Work to bridge the gap between schools/young people and businesses
- Work with colleges and training providers to change the provision of training in the Braintree District to areas where there is clear skills need
- Raise awareness of the new employment opportunities and skill needs of employers in schools and to young people in the District more generally.

Braintree District Employment and Skills Review - 15th July 2014

Recognising that access to appropriate skills may be a barrier to business growth, Braintree District's Business Leaders Board set up a District Employment and Skills Board in 2014, complementing the work of the Essex Employment and Skills Board. As part of the work in setting up this board, an Employer Skills Review was undertaken which highlighted the following in relation to Apprenticeships:

“For England as a whole, the apprenticeship programme has expanded rapidly since government investment increased in 2009/10. Braintree District has performed well in delivering apprenticeships compared to other Essex Districts, with the 4th highest achievement in the County. Apprenticeships will continue to be the main government programme for helping people gain sustainable employment. There is therefore a need to support employers to

take on more apprentices and identify and address any barriers or negative perceptions that employers may have that prevent them taking on an apprentice. However, the move to route funding to employers to purchase apprenticeship training (rather than to the Colleges and training providers) is likely to disadvantage SME's who are less likely than larger employers to have a dedicated HR function."

At a local level the review also noted that:

"The District does well compared to surrounding areas on total numbers of apprentices and it has a good mix of ages currently undertaking an apprenticeship, but they are mainly at the intermediate or advanced level."

Report on Educational attainment in the Braintree District – 2015

Prompted by the ongoing low attainment levels as well as recent issues being experienced in some of the academies in the Braintree town, research was undertaken to look at what work was being done in other areas around Essex to improve educational attainment with different age groups.

It was found in some of the other areas that Local Education Authorities and schools *"needed to work more closely with local businesses to identify the skills and qualifications they need from employees to help them grow and meet their business aspirations. It was noted that **that particularly (in the Enterprise Zones) that local candidates often lack the necessary qualifications particularly in STEM subjects.**"*

7. VIEWS OF EXISTING APPRENTICES

Members of the Task and Finish Group met with current and previous members of the Council's own Apprenticeship programme, and heard from apprentices aged from 16 upwards about their motivation for undertaking an apprenticeship, barriers they had encountered and the role of their friends and family in influencing their decision to take up an apprenticeship. The key findings of this meeting are summarised below:

Motivation

The opportunity to gain a formal qualification at the same time as gaining work experience

This was a major factor in their decision to undertake an apprenticeship, compared to another employment or academic pathway. In particular those who had no set idea about longer term careers noted that an apprenticeship with the Council had enabled them to experience a number of different job roles and gain a range of broad skills to help them in the future.

Apprenticeships offer long term potential

Some highlighted that they had been offered full time work on completion of their course at school/college. It was felt that the long term potential which an apprenticeship would offer outweighed offers of higher immediate salaries in with some companies.

Avoiding Student Loan Debt

Some apprentices commented that they had heard of people coming out of University with high amounts of debt but were unable to get a job due to lack of work experience. An apprenticeship offered a the opportunity to earn both a qualification whilst earning a (albeit initially smaller) wage.

One apprentice commented that despite apprenticeships being seen as a “non-academic” choice, they planned to study at University in the future but felt that gaining work experience was as important to make them stand out when applying to universities and future jobs.

Barriers

Low Apprentice Wages

The Apprenticeship wage was noted as a main barrier when considering taking up an apprenticeship. Some commented that in many cases they would be able to find work full time work which paid more in the short term but felt that these roles would not offer them long term career potential.

Transport

The cost of public transport or operating their own vehicle on an apprenticeship wage was seen as a major barrier, and impacted on where they could apply for apprenticeships. The poor provision of public transport in was also major barrier regardless of whether or not they were seeking employment or undertaking an apprenticeship.

Lack of Information

Current apprentices felt that not enough information was provided about apprenticeships in school or college and that there was a perceived push from education establishments for students to pursue an academic route (A Level's, University etc.) rather than a vocational route. This was considered in part to be due the prestige still attributed by schools or colleges around the number of leavers going onto study at 6th Form or University.

The Influence of Friends and Family

Parents' Knowledge or Perceptions

The majority of those interviewed said that others knew very little about them, or thought that they were either poor quality, cheap labour, or only for those who were “not academic”. It was suggested that some negative perceptions particularly amongst parents were, in part, underpinned by a lack of accessible and appropriate information. Parents who had prior familial experience of apprenticeships tended to be more positively inclined towards their children taking part.

Lack of Peer Group Support

Some of the interviewees commented that they knew of other young people who were considering going down a traditional academic route just to “fit-in” or stay with their friends.

Changing Perceptions

All who participated in interviews commented that once their friends and family had more information about apprenticeships they were more supportive, however this only tended to occur after they had already commenced their apprenticeship and the progress/benefits were seen first-hand.

8. THE VIEWS OF EMPLOYERS

Throughout April and May, members visit three local companies all of whom had very different experiences of recruiting and employing apprentices in the local area.

A summary of visits to each of the companies visited is set out below.

Milbank Concrete in Earls Colne



Milbank Concrete is based on the Earls Colne Business Park and is one of the leading manufacturers of high quality precast concrete products including floors and other specialist and bespoke precast concrete products that include; stair flights, landings, balconies, ground beams, terrace units, wall panels, car park planks and dock levelers. The company employs over 160 people with an annual turnover of £21million.

Managers at Milbank Concrete had previously had difficulties working with providers to recruit apprentices, so had contacted Braintree District Council and the Colchester Institute for additional support to help them to understand the apprenticeship process. Despite this from both organisations Milbank still experiences challenges around apprenticeships and currently only employs one apprentice. Although the company is willing to take on additional apprentices they identified a number of barriers affecting companies like theirs:

- Initially found the apprenticeship system difficult to access and experienced delays in recruiting their first apprentice.
- Transport and access for apprentices is an issue due to the rural location and lack of public transport.
- Schools are not aware of the local opportunities for apprenticeships and are therefore not promoting local apprenticeships or putting students forward as candidates.

Maycast Nokes in Halstead



Maycast-Nokes is a leading manufacturer of high-quality precision castings. The company works across multiple sectors ranging from defence and aerospace to environmental and marine.

Founded over 50 years ago, they remain locally owned and based on single site in the centre of Halstead,

employing 145 people with an annual turnover of more than £6.5 million.

Staff at Maycast-Nokes commented on the company's strong track record for staff retention and creating opportunities for new employees, with approximately 10% of its workforce being trainees or apprentices. The company works with training providers to ensure that training programmes to provide workers with industry recognised skills and qualifications but also deliver the skills needed by the employer to ensure that their business continues to grow.

The company has a longstanding experience of employing apprentices which continues to this day. Representatives from Maycast-Nokes attribute their ongoing success to:

- Having developed a good relationship with local schools, which means they are able to choose from good quality applicants.
- A good local reputation and recommendations from existing employees helping recruitment.
- Offering all employees a career path that develops from the bottom upwards.

Village Glass in Witham



Village Glass manufactures specialised glass for residential and commercial purposes across the UK, including the safety glass, self-cleaning, low-e coatings and solar controlled. In the lead up to the London 2012 Olympic Games, Village Glass supplied Laminated High Performance Solar Control IG Units for the Orbital Tower on the Olympic Park at

Stratford. The company has a turnover of over £16million and currently employs 200 people across two sites in Witham.

Members met with representatives from the company including the Managing Director, HR Manager and operational staff who all commented that their experience had been considerably more difficult than originally anticipated despite the staffing resources available to a company of their size. At the time of meeting with Members, Village Glass currently employed two apprentices. Overall, representatives from Village Glass noted the following about their experience with apprenticeships:

- Initially it was a long Journey to get traction with recruiting apprentices and find a suitable training provider.
- Very labour intensive in both recruiting and then managing the apprentices on a daily basis. This might not be possible in smaller businesses.
- This is not profitable in the short term - Employers have to recognise that this is not a cheap labour solution but an investment in the future of their workforce.

Observations from all businesses visited

Members noted common themes across the three companies visited all of whom commented on the role that schools have in promoting apprenticeships.

All three companies commented that Schools are too focussed on academic results and other targets such as Ofsted inspections. They are not aware of, or not promoting vocation training opportunities.

9. THE VIEWS OF SCHOOLS

As part of the Task and Finish Group's investigation into apprenticeships, survey was sent to all 8 secondary schools in the Braintree District to find out what they do to promote apprenticeships and what barriers they encounter. Three Schools had responded at the time of writing this report. Their comments are summarised below:

1. Does your school currently promote/raise awareness of apprenticeships to your students as a Post-Secondary option? If so how?	All three noted that they provide a combination of classroom based promotion as well as participating in apprenticeship fairs and roadshows. It was noted by one respondent that they also work collaboratively with Notley & Hedingham Schools to organise their own Careers fair which features information about apprenticeships.
2. How would you rate the information available to schools/teachers about apprenticeships?	One school noted that the information available about the concept of apprenticeships OK, however noted that local level information was lacking.
3. What additional information, resources or support would help schools improve promotion/awareness of Apprenticeship to students and parents?	It was suggested that single/central place where all local apprenticeships are available is needed. This could include vacancies from employers and details of different training providers. Another suggestion was for more promotion of higher level apprenticeships and more information for parents who do not always fully understand the benefits of apprenticeship and their equivalence to other qualifications.
4. What (if any) barriers have you encountered when promoting apprenticeships?	All respondents noted that some apprenticeships are perceived as poor quality or do not requiring good GCSE results. One school noted that this has led to some students "giving up" before their exams if "they believe they do not need any qualifications or only minimum entry requirements to gain an apprenticeship".
5. Do you have any other comments about apprenticeships that you would like to share.	It was suggested that apprenticeships should link to universities in order to should lead to a degrees and add value.

10.RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the feedback from participants and observations made by Members, the following recommendations are made to Cabinet:

1. Businesses need help to understand and navigate the apprenticeship process.

The process for hiring an apprentice can be complex, confusing and time consuming. Even large businesses can struggle with the complexity involved in

identifying the correct programme for an apprentice, fulfilling the requirements of the provider and understanding the correct procedures for monitoring an apprentices progress.

As the district is largely made up of small businesses, this becomes an even larger barrier and hindrance – making it a real issue specifically for Braintree. Our Task and Finish Group recommends that a checklist is pulled together, drawing on the experience of those who are further along the apprentice journey, which businesses in the district can refer to when deciding to recruit an apprentice.

2. Businesses need to understand the business case for taking on an apprentice.

Although business leaders appear sold on the societal and moral case for apprenticeships, the business case appears to have less traction. In order to ensure that businesses across our district see apprenticeships as a part of their growth plans, rather than part of their corporate social responsibility plans we recommend positive case studies from companies in the local area are used to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to other businesses and encourage them to “Grow Your Own Talent”.

3. Transport can be a major barrier for young people accessing apprenticeships.

Given that the apprenticeship wage is significantly lower than a full employee may expect, transport (as with further education) can be a real barrier – especially within the more rural parts of our district. We recommend consideration is given to how community transport can be used to make it easier for rurally based young people to access apprenticeships, and for rural businesses to recruit apprentices.

4. Agencies need to work together to address issues affecting apprenticeships.

There are a large number of agencies involved in apprenticeships across the district and for businesses the points of contact can be confusing. By working together, these groups can have a larger and stronger voice as well as making the situation clearer for businesses. We recommend the Essex Skills Board should take a lead in pulling together agencies across the district to promote apprenticeships.

5. The Council should investigate establishing an apprenticeship agency.

The district is heavily skewed towards small businesses which struggle to have the HR functionality to handle recruiting, training and monitoring apprentices. Some small businesses also do not have the demand for an apprentice for a full week. Therefore the Council should look into establishing an apprenticeships agency, which would act a central pool of apprentices recruited and hired by the Council to then be “hired out” to businesses.

The Council could recruit apprentices and be responsible for their HR and businesses could be allocated an apprentice for two or three days a week. An apprentice would then experience working across a range of businesses within the district and the opportunity to have an apprentice would be opened up to a much larger pool of businesses.

ENDS

Overview and Scrutiny Review of Broadband Provision First Evidence Gathering Session		Agenda No: 6
Portfolio	Economic Development	
Corporate Outcome:	A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers	
Report presented by:	Nathan Rowland, Economic Development Officer	
Report prepared by:	Nathan Rowland, Economic Development Officer	
Background Papers:		Public Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Superfast Essex Members Evening Presentation (07.10.2015)• Braintree District Council / Superfast Essex Broadband Guide for Businesses• State Aid Decision on the National Broadband Scheme for the UK• Broadband Delivery UK – Government Guidance Notes• Report and Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 8th June 2016		Key Decision: No
Executive Summary:		
<p>As part of a £1.7bn national programme led by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), the Superfast Essex programme is building out new superfast broadband (mostly via fibre) infrastructure across the county. The original aim of providing ‘Superfast’ coverage (defined by UK Government as downloads above 24 Mbps) to 90% of premises by the end of 2015 has been changed to achieving 95% coverage across the country by December 2017. The Superfast Essex programme’s current target is coverage of 94% by 2019.</p> <p>Braintree District Council has been working extensively with Essex County Council and Superfast Essex and has invested £250,000 to extend the upgrade of broadband provision within the District. BDC’s investment will secure coverage to 2,558 premises across the District- roughly double the original estimate- within a total of 11,149 premises enabled across the District.</p> <p>‘Broadband’ is an issue of concern for many Councillors, particularly those serving the</p>		

rural communities across the District. This report aims to:

- Provide an overview of the BDUK and Superfast Essex programme
- Summarises the different technology options available
- Provide an update on the current coverage levels of Superfast Broadband in the District
- Provide an overview of the next steps of the Superfast Essex Programme in the District
- Outline alternative community/privately funded Broadband options also available
- Recommend outside organisations whom the Committee may wish to invite to attend future meetings

Recommended Decision:

- 1) For Members to note the current position of broadband coverage in the Braintree District, and
- 2) Agree the list of outside speakers to be invited to attend future meetings.

Purpose of Decision:

- 1) To ensure the delivery of the Committee's work programme.
- 2) To decide on the schedule of outside speakers for future meetings.

Any Corporate implications in relation to the following should be explained in detail.

Financial:	None arising out of this report
Legal:	None arising out of this report
Safeguarding:	None arising out of this report
Equalities/Diversity:	None arising out of this report
Customer Impact:	None arising out of this report
Environment and Climate Change:	None arising out of this report
Consultation/Community Engagement:	None arising out of this report
Risks:	None arising out of this report
Officer Contact:	Nathan Rowland
Designation:	Economic Development Officer
Ext. No:	2585
E-mail:	nathan.rowland@braintree.gov.uk

TERMS OF REFERENCE - REVIEW OF BROADBAND PROVISION

1. Review of the process and progress of Essex Superfast Broadband Programme
 - a) Delivery of Phase 1 of the Programme
 - b) Delivery of Phase 2a of the Programme
 - c) Government Subsidised Interim Schemes
2. To review the Communication on the Broadband improvement programme to the general public and businesses
3. To consider other technologies to establish Superfast Broadband in areas not likely to be connected including the
 - a) effectiveness,
 - b) availability
 - c) affordability
4. To review how businesses can obtain reliable, fast access to broadband across the District
5. To review future growth in the District and how this growth can access superfast broadband
6. Future requirements of Superfast Broadband to meet District Needs

1. BACKGROUND TO THE BDUK PROGRAMME

The BDUK programme was launched in 2013 by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with the aim of providing superfast broadband coverage to 90% of the UK by early 2016 and 95% by December 2017. In December 2015 the government also announced a Universal Service Obligation to ensure that all areas of the UK have access to basic broadband (2Mbps) for all from December 2015.

It is estimated that *“Through local projects with Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations, the public sector is investing over £1.7 billion in improving broadband through the Superfast Broadband Programme.”* The government also estimates *“a net economic impact of up to £20 for every £1 of public invested by 2024”*¹.

The BDUK programme is deployed through local delivery agencies, normally the County or Metropolitan/City Council. Essex County Council established the Superfast Essex programme as the delivery means for the Greater Essex Area. and is funded both from the BDUK programme, Essex County Council and from contributions from some District Councils.

In Essex, more than £51million is being invested into the Superfast Essex programme to improve broadband coverage in the county so that 94 percent of Greater Essex has access to superfast broadband (with the potential to provide superfast speeds of 24Mbps and above) by 2019. The programme has also ensured that a minimum of 2Mbps download speed was available across Essex by summer 2016, via the Satellite Scheme.

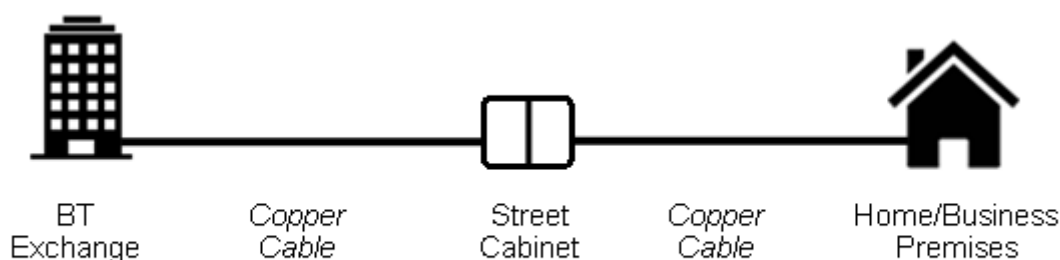
¹ DCMS - UK Next Generation Network Infrastructure Deployment Plan – March 2016

2. TECHNOLOGY

There a range of technologies which can be used to provide broadband solutions to homes and businesses; the main types are explained in brief below:

A) Traditional / ADSL2+ broadband

Traditional broadband, known as ADSL2+ (asymmetric digital subscriber line) is delivered via copper telephone lines. According to Ofcom, download speeds for ADSL2+ in Essex average 9.7Mbps, but speeds of up to 15Mb can be achieved if the customer is close to the telephone exchange. ADSL2+ is the widest available broadband option in the country but speeds reduce the further the premises is from the local exchange due to signal loss over the copper cables. The BDUK programme is in the process of replacing this technology with other faster options.



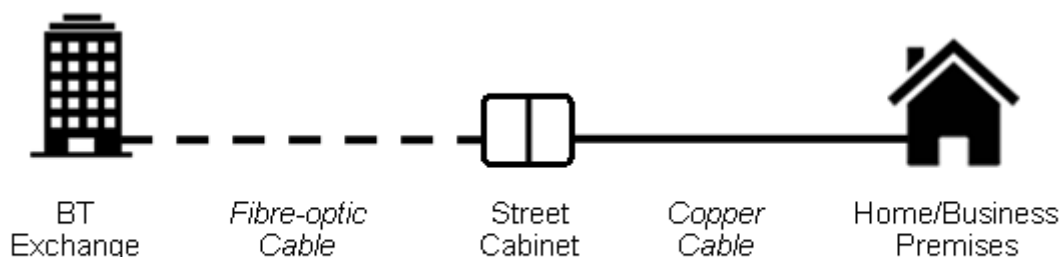
Conventional ADSL Broadband Connections

B) Fibre Broadband

Fibre broadband is the next generation of broadband. It can offer a faster and more reliable service than ADSL as it uses a different technology – fibre optic cable. Under the current Superfast Essex programme fibre broadband will be delivered in two ways: largely fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) and some fibre to the premises (FTTP).

B1) Fibre to the Cabinet

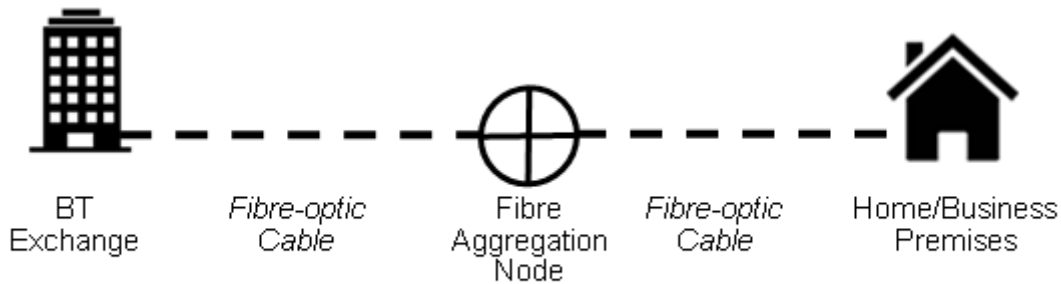
Fibre-to-the-Cabinet (FTTC) involves running fibre optic cables from a main telephone exchange or distribution point to the street cabinets which then connect to a standard copper phone line to homes and business premises. In Essex, fibre broadband averages download speeds of 55.3Mbps (Ofcom, June 2014). Speeds of up to 80Mb can be achieved if the customer is close to the new street cabinet, however the signal speed degrades the further the premises is located from the cabinet.



Fibre to the Cabinet Broadband Connections

B2) Fibre to the Premises

Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) provide a fibre optic connection the full distance from the main exchange to the home or business premises and can deliver speeds over 100mps. Where there is no existing ducting, new cables must be buried in the ground, or via telegraph poles to each individual premises being connected.



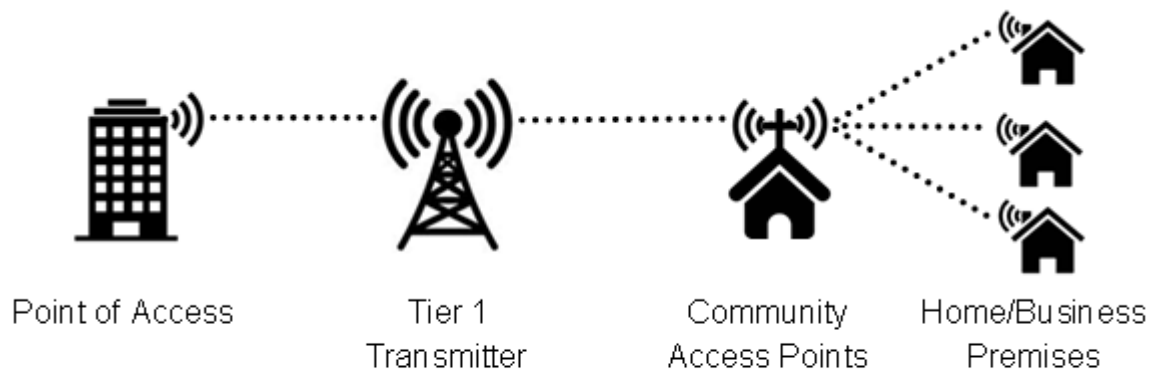
Fibre to the Premises Broadband Connections

C) Wireless Broadband Solutions

Wireless broadband is technology that provides Internet access through fixed access points attached to the home or business premises which is then relayed by cable to a router or other access point inside the premises.

C1) Fixed Wireless Networks (FWN)/ Fixed Wireless Access (FWA)

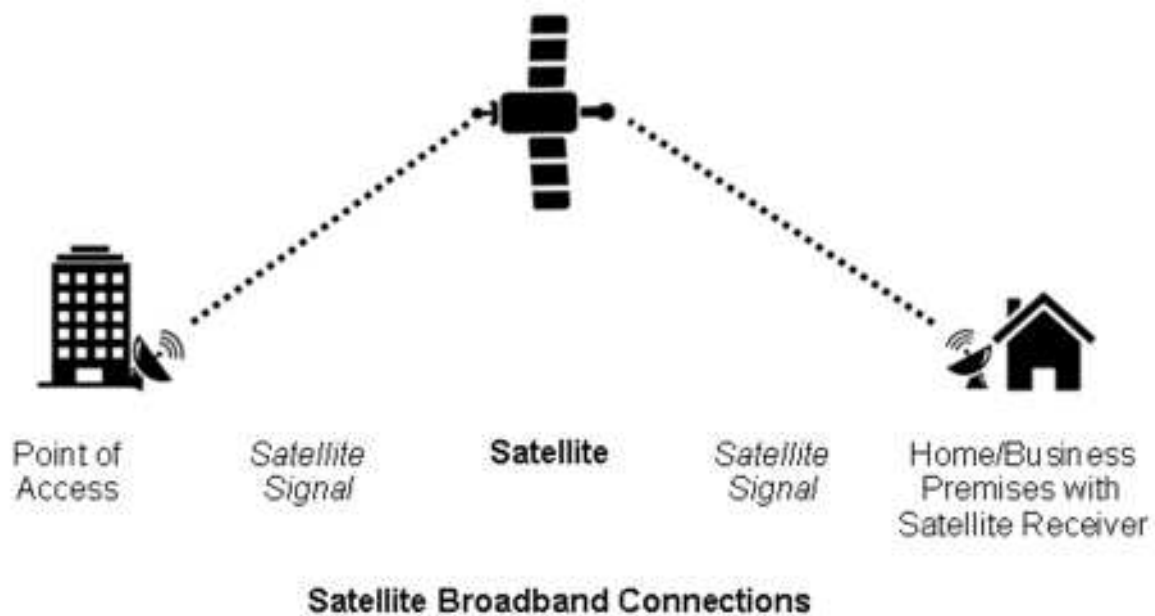
Fixed Wireless providers use the radio waves to transmit signals to fixed access points (which can be connected to buildings such as Churches, barns, or Offices). The signal is then relayed to receivers mounted on homes and business premises. Wireless connectivity normally requires clear lines of sight but can provide upload and download speeds of over 24mps.



Fixed Wireless Network Broadband Connections

C2) Satellite Broadband

Satellite broadband uses a satellite dish to provide two-way access to broadband services in areas where traditional fixed-line services aren't available. Satellite can now offer download speeds of up to 20Mbps (not superfast). Satellite services may be affected by latency (a signal delay due to distance) so this can make activities like video conferencing and online gaming difficult but is considered sufficient for most other forms of file transfer.



3. TECHNOLOGY USED IN THE SUPERFAST ESSEX PROGRAMME

All public investment in the BDUK programme is restricted to technology classified as Next Generation Access (NGA) compliant. NGA compliance is a key requirement for public funding via BDUK, and also in terms of maintaining EU State aid regulations, and refers to technology which delivers a significant upgrade to the speed, quality and resilience of a broadband service.

Various procurement processes have been undertaken by Superfast Essex to select suppliers in what remains a highly regulated and complex policy area. Publically funded intervention is only possible in 'White' areas, those that currently do not have NGA infrastructure and where the private sector has no plans to provide this within 3 years. This places a premium on supplier engagement and accurate mapping.

Under the Superfast Essex programme the majority of the rollout is being delivered using Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) technology under a contract with BT, while the Rural Challenge (Pilot Project) in Epping Forest (delivered by Gigaclear plc) uses Fibre to the Premises (FTTP).

Whilst FTTP provides higher speeds, the cost per premises is significantly higher than FTTC solutions. An increasing use of FTTP technology could be made as the programme gets into more rural areas as it may be less costly than installing a new cabinet for small groups of properties. Superfast Essex has also noted that BT has made a commitment to provide fibre to the premises on all new housing developments over 100 properties free of charge and will negotiate with builders on smaller developments.

At the point of commissioning the Superfast Essex programme, the available wireless technology did not meet the NGA requirements of the BDUK scheme and as such has not yet been used in this programme to date. Following an open market review and a challenge made by a number of commercial operators some Wireless Internet Service Providers (WISPs) have been ruled as being NGA compliant and would be eligible to bid for future contracts should they arise.

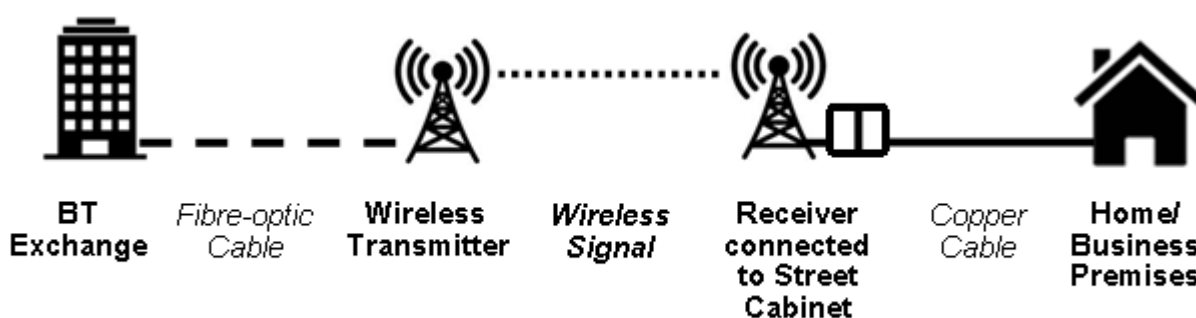
A) Limitations to the FTTC Technology

Where properties are located more than a mile from the cabinet, the broadband signal degrades through the copper line to the point where premises cannot access superfast speeds. This presents a challenge for many of our rural communities who are located more than a mile from their nearest cabinet.

Superfast Essex has noted that if the area due to be upgraded is too far from the cabinet that serves that community, then where funding allows, the contractor will need to implement a technical solution to ensure the connection actually reaches the homes/premises at superfast speed. What this means in practice is that BT (under the contract with Superfast Essex) will likely install a new cabinet closer to the area they are upgrading (although this may not be the only solution that could be implemented).

B) Wireless to the Cabinet Technology

In June 2016 BT has also begun rolling out new Wireless to the Cabinet Solutions (WTTC) in Essex. The WTTC technology is capable of providing broadband download speeds of up to 80Mbps, the same as FTTC, and avoids the need for underground cabling. Unlike fixed wireless broadband which provides a wireless broadband connection from a mast into a property, WTTC beams radio waves to a receiving antenna linked to fixed broadband cabinets. Premises are connected up to the fibre cabinet in the usual way requiring no additional connection equipment at the premises.



Wireless to the Cabinet Broadband Connections

WTTC technology has the potential to avoid the cost and disruption of laying new duct and cabling and is being considered to help the Superfast Essex programme reach further remote rural locations, which do not yet have a superfast broadband service.

C) G.Fast

A possible future technology currently being trialled by BT is the G.Fast technology which combines aspects of fibre and copper networks to deliver speeds of up to 500mps to premises. Large-scale field trials are live in Huntingdon and Gosforth involving approximately 4,000 homes, whilst a commercial pilot is live in Cherry Hinton (Cambridge). Like standard FTTC technology there are limitations on the distance from the cabinet to the premises. BT is currently reporting 400metres at the longest distance for achieving ultrafast speeds.

4. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUPERFAST ESSEX PROGRAMME

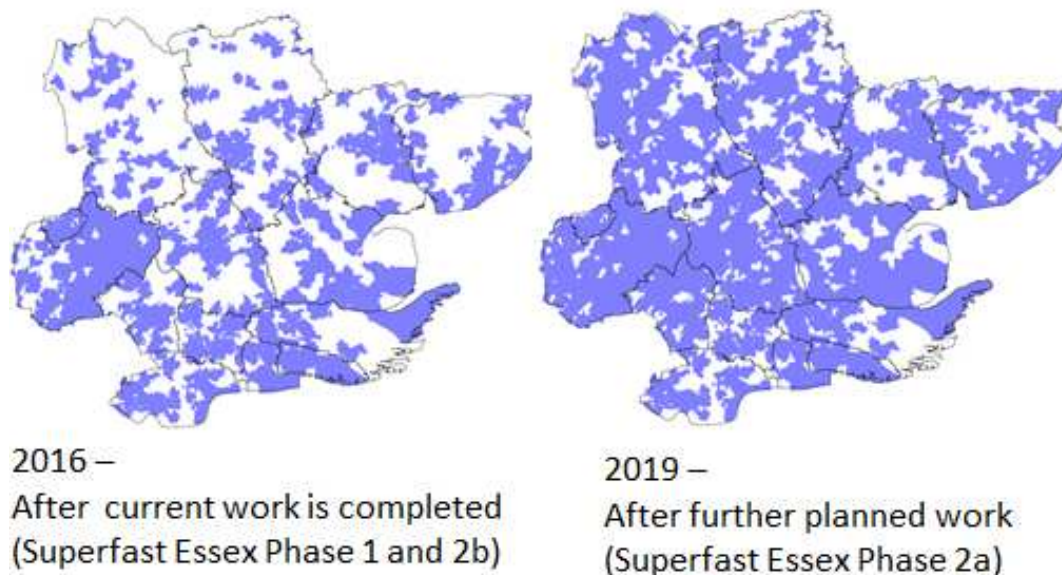
Braintree District Council has invested £250,000 in the Superfast Essex Programme, the highest amount from any Essex Authority to date. This funding will be used to support the rollout of Phase Two of the programme commencing this year. The Council has also been actively involved in working with Superfast Essex to support initiatives for businesses including:

- a. Jointly producing a broadband guide for businesses
- b. Organising a Braintree District business meeting on Superfast Broadband
- c. Helping Superfast Essex to Map key employment sites and business parks across the district to identify areas requiring upgrading
- d. Promoting subsidy schemes such as the satellite broadband vouchers and Super-connected Cities Scheme (now closed)
- e. Supporting delivery and promotion of business events

5. SUPERFAST BROADBAND COVERAGE IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT

Phase 1 of the superfast Essex Programme is due to complete (ahead of schedule) in July 2016, and has enabled an additional 65,000 premises across Essex and an additional 9,000 in the Braintree District to connect to Superfast Broadband.

Coverage levels for the Braintree District are currently estimated at 73%, which is considerably lower than the average for the rest of Essex. As such Braintree District Council has been actively lobbying Superfast Essex to secure a share of the Essex Wide £1.9million “gain-share” payback from BT. This is a “success dividend” payable by BT when take up of fibre broadband services have reached a certain level.



Superfast Essex has now identified the additional areas for upgrade with the intention of bringing the Braintree District up to 95% coverage by the end of Phase Two. Despite this, residents and businesses are encouraged to continue registering their interest in receiving Superfast Broadband in order to support the case for further investment going forward.

Going forward Braintree District Council will work with Superfast Essex to identify any areas still not covered by the scheme, and; will work with Superfast Essex to identify opportunities to deliver NGA complaint solutions in these areas through the BDUK programme and/or through local community investment partnerships.

Residents and businesses in areas of the District not covered by the current Fibre Rollout Programme are now eligible for subsidies under the Government's Satellite Broadband Voucher Scheme to provide access to broadband speeds of a minimum of 2Mbps (not superfast speeds) as an interim solution.

6. COMMUNITY BROADBAND PARTNERSHIPS

Due to issues with broadband speeds particularly in the rural areas and the timescales involved in delivering the BDUK scheme, some communities are choosing to invest private funding in alternative schemes to bring faster connections to their communities sooner.

Schemes include the BT Openreach Community Fibre Partnership programme which enables local communities to part fund BT's installation of fibre broadband to areas not currently included in any rollout scheme, whilst Wireless Internet Service Providers are also providing an alternative to fibre schemes through the use of Fixed Wireless Network Technology mentioned earlier.

It should be noted that whilst community broadband schemes offers an alternative route to connectivity in rural areas, Braintree District Council is unlikely to be able to provide grant funding to communities wishing to participate in these schemes due to state aid rules. Instead communities are required to raise the funding locally through private sources.

7. SUGGESTED SPEAKERS FOR FUTURE MEETING

It is suggested that the following speakers are invited to attend future meetings to provide additional information to the committee:

- Connie Kerbst , Superfast Essex
- Alternative/Private Broadband Providers
- Giles Ellerton, BT