

# Minutes

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

2nd November 2016



### Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
Mrs M Cunningham	Yes	R Ramage	Yes
J Goodman	Apologies	F Ricci	Yes
P Horner	Yes	Miss V Santomauro	No
D Hufton-Rees	No	P Schwier	Yes
G Maclure	Yes	C Siddall (Chairman)	Yes
D Mann (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Vacancy	

### 31 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**INFORMATION:** The following interest was declared:-

Councillor G Maclure declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Fourth Evidence Gathering Session for the Committee’s Scrutiny Review into Broadband Provision’ as an employee of British Telecom (BT).

Councillor P Schwier declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda Item 5 – ‘Fourth Evidence Gathering Session for the Committee’s Scrutiny Review into Broadband Provision’ as a customer of both County Broadband and British Telecom (BT).

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors Maclure and Schwier remained in the meeting and took part in the debate and decision when the Item was considered.

### 32 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

**INFORMATION:** There were no questions asked, or statements made.

### 33 **MINUTES**

**DECISION:** That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21st September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 34 **FOURTH EVIDENCE GATHERING SESSION FOR THE COMMITTEE’S SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO BROADBAND PROVISION**

**INFORMATION:** This meeting was the fourth evidence gathering session of the work programme for the Scrutiny Review into broadband provision in the Braintree District.

The theme of the session was to provide Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a comprehensive overview of the different broadband services on offer and the ways in which the Braintree District could benefit from these as well as any barriers that may be faced.

James Saunby, Founder and Consulting Director of GreySky Consulting had kindly agreed to participate in this session of the Scrutiny Review and he attended the meeting to present information and to answer Members' questions:-

The following points were made by Mr Saunby, Managing Director, County Broadband in his presentation to the Committee:

- The target for the majority of the UK was to reach around 95% superfast broadband coverage.
- The BT infrastructure provided good value for money in terms of achieving 95% due to its construction and operational qualities; it was the most efficient way of providing superfast broadband of a larger quantity. However once the natural capabilities of the infrastructure had been reached it then becomes prohibitively expensive.
- The fibre to the cabinet (FTTC) infrastructure which uses optical fibres to the green cabinet and then copper wires from the green cabinet to the property made it very easy to roll out a ubiquitous coverage to that area.
- The BT infrastructure that had been installed over the past few years had been phenomenal and it was unlikely that this could have been achieved by anyone else, however this infrastructure had now been exhausted and new technologies needed to be looked at.
- The Central Government expectation was that for the next stage different technologies and infrastructure should be looked at.
- The BDUK model started off with a view that 66% coverage would be achieved nationally by a commercial roll out, with some additional funding BDUK were confident that 90% coverage could be achieved.
- There had always been a boundary in the percentage of superfast broadband that could be achieved. There had always been a percentage of households who could not obtain superfast broadband, however as it moved in to the last remaining few percent it was acknowledged that this needed to change and that 100% needed to be achieved.
- This main issue with achieving 100% coverage was that when it came down to the last few properties the potential cost was around £20,000 to £30,000 per property and it was unnecessary installing very expensive infrastructure if the household did not want it. If the household did want coverage then some form of infrastructure would need to be put in place to ensure that they had access.
- There were several things that needed to be considered moving forward , some of which included; what technologies and suppliers would be fit for purpose and how would it be decided who had access (coverage for those who want it and no coverage for those who don't)
- In England and Wales the Universal Service Obligation (USO) was that everyone had a right to 10mb per second.
- Discussions were being held with the Scottish Government who were running their own R100 programme and it had been decided that by 2021 everyone in Scotland would have access to 30mb per second.
- There was a small area in Scotland that had already met the USO for superfast broadband as it was part of a project undertaken a few years ago with the view that anyone who wants access to superfast broadband could have it.

- Government proposals of a national coverage of 95% were an entirely realistic figure as the BT infrastructure supported this very well and it was anticipated that by the end of next year (2017) this coverage would have been achieved within a fraction of a percent nationally and in most local areas.
- The majority of people understood superfast broadband to be about moving large files and data that would have been inconceivable to most people a few years ago.
- Increasingly, particularly in businesses, people understood the need for video conferencing and voice over internet telephony over the same data, which would require real time applications.
- A new E-Healthcare company was being launched in East Riding to introduce new technologies into the health care system.
- In order to maintain health and social care beyond 5 years' time dramatic changes needed to be made in terms of delivery, if the infrastructure was not in place it will not work.
- A lot of Local Authorities were retreating from striving for the target of 100% coverage as a result of Central Government announcement of the USO as it was not yet known how the USO would be achieved.
- The USO was designed for people who had less than 10mb per second. It was recognised that fairly soon 10mb per second would become inadequate for several people. Many businesses could not run on 10mb per seconds.
- In respect of the BT Infinity 1 service this offered 50mb per second download speeds and around 15-20mb per second upload speeds, however this allowed for 15mb per second for 90% of a busy three hours which meant that automatically for these busy hours there was almost no service guarantee. Looking at average SME usage there was around 35 minutes a day where they were not guaranteed to get 15mb per second. It was recognised as a good data channel but not a business grade data channel.
- Mr Saunby made reference to a radiologist in East Lothian who was able run his business from home providing tele-radiology services for hospitals in London and Scotland as a result of a fixed wireless solution.
- There were a number of ways to provide superfast broadband to those who wanted it. The most obvious form of delivery was to follow the Superfast Essex and BDUK models, to go out and purchase a service provider to meet the specification. Another delivery method was to promote the demand for ultrafast broadband in the cities so that it became worthwhile for providers to supply it.
- BDUK currently provided vouchers for residential users under the better broadband scheme, which enabled residents who were currently receiving less than 2mb per second the opportunity to claim a voucher towards superfast broadband costs.
- Vouchers were highly encouraged as part of the solution.
- An essential element in providing broadband to remote rural communities was to make broadband backhaul available. The installation of backhaul was an expensive process which would involve unbundling and exchange which would cost around £12,000 and adding a gigabit lead into the exchange terminated on the open internet with IP transit connection. The exchange would need around 2000 properties to make it commercially viable. The backhaul provision to the exchange would then need to be dispersed; this could be achieved mostly by fixed wireless. In Essex dark fibre had been installed and this enabled a mix of point to point wireless and dark fibre to be looked at. The entirety of the Braintree District was viable for backhaul infrastructure and would therefore become relatively easy to enable communities with a voucher scheme.

- The USO for fixed telephony required the resident to pay the first £100, the USO then paid the remaining balance of up to £3000 to £4000. If the connection to the property was more than this the resident would need to pay the remaining amount.
- It had got to the point where it was mostly specific technical issues that were preventing areas from being connected.
- The only solution to properties situated in “not spots” would be to install a fibre to the property however, in urban areas if there was no available duct space this can become expensive. If there was no available duct then 80% of the cost of providing fibre to the property service was in digging up the street.
- There was hardly anywhere in the UK that superfast broadband could not be delivered to. There would be a few places in the District where satellite connectivity would be required where fixed wires or fibre solutions would be too costly.
- The main issues in respect of satellite systems were the costs and the natural latency.
- There had been an accepted necessity for public sector intervention to get beyond 66% up to 95%. The last few percent was significantly more difficult and public sector intervention should be expected to deliver this.
- The expectation was that there would be a USO.

The Chairman thanked the Mr Saunby for his attendance and he expressed his gratitude for his contributions to the Scrutiny Review.

## 35 **DISCUSSION ON POTENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT**

**INFORMATION:** Members were asked to consider the potential recommendations for the Scrutiny Review in to Broadband Provision for the Braintree District.

Member consider the recommendation which had been submitted prior to the meeting and agreed that the following recommendations be include in the final report and to be referred to Full Council and to Cabinet for response;

1. Braintree District Council to support and encourage Superfast Essex to achieve 100% superfast (30Mbs) broadband coverage by 2019
2. That Braintree District Council’s website should include easy to understand and visual information about the District only, with alphabetically listed Town/Parish information, showing areas already enabled, and areas to be enabled with dates & superfast broadband information.
3. That Overview and Scrutiny Committee should monitor and report Braintree District’s progress/implementation every six months to Committee & Cabinet until completed 2019, highlighting success stories from the local area.
4. Braintree District Council (in conjunction with Superfast Essex) to tender for companies to deliver the most suitable and appropriate broadband solutions to rural areas of the Braintree District. ( Least cost - Fastest to deploy - upgradable)
5. Braintree District Council should consider the funding of 100% of superfast broadband coverage from New Homes Bonus and/or Capital Projects Funding

**DECISION:** That Members agreed:

- 1) The recommendations for inclusion in the final report and to be referred to full Council and to Cabinet for response.
- 2) That authority is delegated to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to finalise the report.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** To enable the Committees' report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the Procedure Rules for Scrutiny.

36 **DECISION PLANNER**

**DECISION:** That the Decision Planner for the period 1st December 2016 to 31st March 2017 be noted.

37 **UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

**INFORMATION:** Members were advised that the report of the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review of Buses and Community Transport had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2016 and to Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2016 where it was agreed to refer the report to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> November for consideration and response.

The report of the Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review of Apprenticeships in the Braintree District had been presented to Full Council on 5<sup>th</sup> September where it was agreed to refer the report to Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> November for consideration and response.

The Task and Finish Group Scrutiny Review in to Obesity in the Braintree District had held its first two meetings, where Councillor Mrs Wilson was elected as the Chairman. The group had held meetings with representatives from Braintree District Council, Essex County Council and Slimming World. The Task and Finish Group were due to hold their next meeting in December 2016.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.44pm.

Councillor D Mann  
(Vice-Chairman in the Chair)