

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AGENDA

Wednesday, 23rd November 2016 at 7:15 PM

Council Chamber, Braintree District Council, Causeway House,  
Bocking End, Braintree, CM7 9HB

**THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
*(Please note this meeting will be audio recorded)*  
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**Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to attend this meeting to transact the business set out in the Agenda.**

Councillor Mrs M Cunningham

Councillor J Goodman

Councillor P Horner

Councillor D Hufton-Rees

Councillor G Maclure

Councillor D Mann (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor R Ramage

Councillor F Ricci

Councillor Miss V Santomauro

Councillor P Schwier

C Siddall (Chairman)

Vacancy

Members unable to attend the meeting are requested to forward their apologies for absence to the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) by 3pm on the day of the meeting.

N BEACH  
Chief Executive

## **INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS - DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

### **Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, Other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest**

Any member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, other Pecuniary Interest or Non-Pecuniary Interest must declare the nature of their interest in accordance with the Code of Conduct. Members must not participate in any discussion of the matter in which they have declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or other Pecuniary Interest or participate in any vote, or further vote, taken on the matter at the meeting. In addition, the Member must withdraw from the chamber where the meeting considering the business is being held unless the Member has received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer.

### **Question Time**

The Agenda allows for a period of up to 30 minutes when members of the public can speak. Members of the public wishing to speak are requested to register by contacting the Governance and Members Team on 01376 552525 or email [governance@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:governance@braintree.gov.uk) no later than 2 working days prior to the meeting. The Council reserves the right to decline any requests to register to speak if they are received after this time. Members of the public can remain to observe the public session of the meeting.

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**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

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2nd November 2016 (copy previously circulated).

**4 Public Question Time**

(See paragraph above)

**5 Scrutiny of the Priorities for 2017-18 and Initial Budget Position.**

To receive a presentation from the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members on the priorities for 2017-18 and to consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy; 2017-18 to 2020-21.

**Report and Presentation Slides are to follow.**

Note:

1. The report for this item is prepared for the publication of the Agenda for the meeting Cabinet on 29th November 2016.
2. All Members of the Council are invited to attend for this item as part of the Member Development Programme to enable them to understand the Council's priorities for 2017/18 and to receive details of the initial budget proposal to meet those priorities
3. Only Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can vote on this item.

**6 Overview of Broadband Provision**

**5 - 13**

- 7 Update on Task and Finish Groups**  
To receive a verbal update on the progress of the Task and Finish Groups.
- 8 Urgent Business - Public Session**  
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.
- 9 Exclusion of the Public and Press**  
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.*

**PRIVATE SESSION**

**Page**

- 10 Urgent Business - Private Session**  
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.

<b>Overview of Broadband Provision</b>		<b>Agenda No:6</b>
<b>Portfolio</b>	<b>Economic Development</b>	
<b>Corporate Outcome:</b>	<p><b>A sustainable environment and a great place to live, work and play</b>  <b>A well connected and growing district with high quality homes and infrastructure</b>  <b>A prosperous district that attracts business growth and provides high quality employment opportunities</b>  <b>Delivering better outcomes for residents and businesses and reducing costs to taxpayers</b></p>	
<b>Report presented by:</b>	<b>Nathan Rowland, Economic Development Officer</b>	
<b>Report prepared by:</b>	<b>Nathan Rowland, Economic Development Officer</b>	
<b>Background Papers:</b>		<b>Public Report</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports and Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> July, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 21<sup>st</sup> September and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016</li> </ul>		<b>Key Decision: No</b>
<b>Executive Summary:</b>		
<p>'Broadband' is an issue of concern for many Councillors, particularly those serving the rural communities across the District, with around 27 percent of the District (<i>source: Superfast Essex July 2016</i>) still unable to access superfast broadband speeds, with some areas falling below even the basic 2mbps standard.</p> <p>Between the 13<sup>th</sup> July and 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee held a number of information gathering sessions with representatives from a range of organisations in order to gain a greater understanding of the issues affecting the Braintree District with relation to Superfast Broadband Coverage and to explore potential technical solutions available to maximise coverage in the area.</p> <p>This report sets out the recommendations of the committee and along with a summary of the key evidence gathered.</p>		
<b>Recommended Decision:</b>		
<p>Members are asked to consider the findings of the scrutiny review and the recommendations set out below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Braintree District Council to support and encourage Superfast Essex to achieve 100% superfast (30Mbs) broadband coverage by 2019</li> </ol>		

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 O&S should monitor and report BDC 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

**Purpose of Decision:**

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

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

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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.

In 2015 Braintree District Council committed £250,000 to support the Superfast Essex rollout programme being operated by Essex County Council under the BDUK programme. This has secured commitment from Superfast Essex ensuring that a minimum of 95% of the District will be connected by 2020. Despite this commitment, the Superfast Essex Programme the Braintree District has faced a number of challenges.

In May 2016, a review of Broadband was added to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee's work programme in order to review the following:

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 their
  - 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

This report sets out the key findings of the Committee and the resulting recommendations.

### **1. Review of the process and progress of Essex Superfast Broadband Programme**

On the 24<sup>th</sup> August Connie Kerbst from the Superfast Essex Programme attended the Committee to update members on the current progress of the rollout programme and outline plans for future phases. At this meeting the following was noted:



Prior to the BDUK programme, BT's commercial rollout of superfast broadband was low in Essex. After phase 1 the Braintree District has achieved 73% coverage, an increase of 11% or an additional 11,487 premises compared to the commercial only coverage at the start of the programme. Despite this increase, coverage in the Braintree District remains the second lowest coverage level ahead of only Uttlesford.

Phase 2 of the Superfast Essex programme is now underway across Essex, and will upgrade an additional 14,916 premises in the district by 2019, bringing superfast broadband coverage levels to 92%.

Superfast Essex also announced the intention to commission Phase 3 of the programme which will bring coverage levels to a minimum of 95% of the District by 2020. The tendering process will commence in late 2016 and will run alongside Phase 2 from next year. This new phase would seek tenders for a variety of different technologies and therefore may not be the standard Fibre to the Cabinet solution implemented so far. *If* a viable and cost effective solution can be found that can deliver over the minimum required level, then Superfast Essex have stated that they will seek to implement this.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE SUPERFAST ESSEX TO ACHIEVE 100% SUPERFAST (30MBS) BROADBAND COVERAGE BY 2019

**2. To review the Communication on the Broadband improvement programme to the general public and businesses**

The Committee discussed issues around communication with Connie Kerbst from Superfast Essex where it was noted that Braintree District Council had already helped to create a guide for businesses around broadband options and assists with disseminating information to local businesses through the Council's business mailing list. Members noted that communication needs to be ongoing in order to ensure that residents and business stay engaged.

The committee highlighted a number of areas of concern relating to a number of information and communication about the programme for members of the public. This included

- The high proportion of online-only information available
- Lack of information about superfast broadband cabinet locations
- The amount and complexity of information on the Superfast Essex Website
- Difficulties using the interactive map
- The large timescales for given for upgrades

Members noted that Braintree District Council had a role to play at a local level in ensuring information is disseminated through its own communication channels including online and in print.

Superfast Essex informed the committee that the majority of information about the delivery schedule come from their contractor BT, therefore there is a natural lag in getting information passed on. It was noted however that in relation to completion timescales for an area, these are updated as delivery progresses to within a month.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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 O&S SHOULD MONITOR AND REPORT BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROGRESS/IMPLEMENTATION EVERY SIX MONTHS TO COMMITTEE & CABINET UNTIL COMPLETED 2019, HIGHLIGHTING SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE LOCAL AREA.
- 3. To consider other technologies to establish Superfast Broadband in areas not likely to be connected including their**
- d) effectiveness,**
  - e) availability**
  - f) affordability**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> September the Committee Received Presentations from representatives from three broadband providers including; Lloyd Felton from County Broadband, Joe Frost from Gigaclear PLC, and Giles Ellerton from BT, all of who offer an alternative product to bring superfast broadband to homes and businesses.

County Broadband gave an overview of their main service which is a Fixed Wireless Network solution that provides Internet access using radio waves to transmit signals to fixed access points (which can be connected to buildings such as Churches or Offices). The signal is then sent to receivers mounted on homes and business premises. It was noted that as this solution does not require the laying of cables so it is notably cheaper to implement than other solutions, but can still offer superfast speeds and be classed as NGA compliant. Mr Felton informed the committee that the company currently provides a broadband service to over 130 villages in Essex and Suffolk including ones in the Braintree District.

Joe Frost, gave an overview of Gigaclear plc and talked about their main technology Fibre to the Premises broadband. This provides a fibre optic connection the full distance from the 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 to each individual premises being connected. This solution was recognised as being able to provide up to ultrafast speeds however due to the cost of installing the cables underground it was also the most costly per premises to provide. Mr Frost informed the

committee that this technology has been trialled in Epping Forest as part of Superfast Essex's Rural Challenge pilot.

Gilles Ellerton from BT gave an overview of two key solutions that BT has been deploying. One is the provision of fibre to a cabinet and the other is the provision of fibre to a premises. Fibre-to-the-Cabinet involves running fibre optic cables from the telephone exchange or distribution point to the street cabinets which then connect to a standard copper phone line to homes and business premises. The main issue identified with Fibre to the cabinet is that speeds degrade the further away from the cabinet the signal has to travel, therefore not all premises may receive superfast speeds after their street cabinet has been connected. This helps to explain issues that the committee has experienced when constituents report one side of a road can access superfast broadband whilst the other side has a much lower performance or is unable to access it at all.

Mr Ellerton also provided information about BT's 'Community Fibre Partnerships' which helps to connect communities which are not receiving fibre broadband either commercially or through the BDUK programme. This scheme enables communities to co-invest directly with BT who in return provide a broadband infrastructure solution to the area. The community is expected to fund the difference between BT's contribution and the overall cost of the scheme. This arrangement has been in operation for about four years and contracts have been entered into with approximately 100 communities across the United Kingdom.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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. To review how businesses can obtain reliable, fast access to broadband across the District**

*Information gathered on this topic has been included under sections 2 and 3 and their resulting recommendations*

**6. To review future growth in the District and how this growth can access superfast broadband**

Connie Kerbst noted that Superfast Essex had fed back comprehensively to the draft policy of the Local Plan to ensure that Braintree District Council had a (draft) policy in place to ensure that developers provided the infrastructure for Superfast Broadband when new developments are constructed. As a result most large developments will not need to be "upgraded" later.

**7. Future requirements of Superfast Broadband to meet District Needs**

On the 2nd November, the committee undertook its final information gathering session with a talk from James Saunby Founder and Consulting Director of GreySky Consulting. James had previously worked in the IT and telecoms sector and more recently is working with an number of public sector agencies to advise on how to deliver of Superfast Broadband in different areas of the country.

Mr Saunby informed the committee that the demands on broadband infrastructure continue to increase not just for business, domestic and leisure use but also as a tool to deliver essential public services. “Telehealth” services (*the distribution of health-related services and information via electronic information and telecommunication technologies. Allowing for long distance patient/clinician contact and care, advice, reminders, education, intervention, monitoring and remote admissions*) were cited as an example of a new technology that would be essential for the National Health Service in the future.

Mr Saunby also gave an overview of different technologies current available as well as their strengths and weaknesses. It was put to members that no one single solution was likely to deliver close to 100% coverage and that any area aiming for this target should consider a combination of technical solutions.

The Committee also discussed possible funding models and whether 100% coverage would be possible using purely commercial funding models. Mr Saunby noted that in his opinion it was not possible without additional public sector funding. It was also suggested that as areas get over 95% coverage then alternative “demand led” models should be considered instead of a blanket rollout programme. Mr Saunby suggested a two stage funding approach consisting of:

- Public sector funding for the provision of backhaul to all cabinets in an area (thus enabling new superfast connections be put in place if desired by residents/businesses).
- A publically funded voucher scheme to enable interested residents and business to access funding for 100% of their upgrade costs for their individual premises. Interested communities would then have the ability to combine vouchers of each interested party and engage with private suppliers and commission a bespoke solution (or solutions) to meet the needs of their area.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

5. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL SHOULD CONSIDER THE FUNDING OF 100% OF SUPERFAST BROADBAND COVERAGE FROM NEW HOMES BONUS AND/OR CAPITAL PROJECTS FUNDING

## **AKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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

- Connie Kerbst, Superfast Essex
- Lloyd Felton, County Broadband
- Joe Frost, Gigaclear PLC
- Gilles Ellerton, BT
- James Saunby, GreySky Consulting

**ENDS**