

CABINET – 16TH NOVEMBER 2017

Report of the Overview Scrutiny Group

ITEM 10 LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND

Purpose of Report

To consider the comments and recommendations of the Overview Scrutiny Group regarding the Council's commitment to, and investment in, Phase 3 of the Leicester and Leicestershire Superfast Broadband programme.

Recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group

That the Cabinet be informed that the Group supports the recommendations as set out in the report of the Strategic Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration, and Regulatory Services.

Reason

Having considered the report and asked questions of the Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development on the matter, the Group concluded that it would be appropriate for the Cabinet to approve the recommendations set out in the report.

Meeting Discussion

Following questions from the Group, the Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development provided the following responses:

- (i) The funding was designed to achieve superfast broadband speeds (defined as at least 24 Mbps) to local service cabinets. The broadband speed achieved at individual properties would depend on the distance of the property from the cabinet and the equipment that was used in the property.
- (ii) The Government defined what the superfast broadband standard was. It had changed that standard from 15 Mbps to the current 24 Mbps.
- (iii) It was not possible to say how many properties in Charnwood would benefit from the further round of funding, or where those properties would be, until the contract for the work had been procured. The contractor would look at where the best results could be achieved. It was known which cabinets remained to be upgraded.
- (iv) The network infrastructure was owned by BT but there was an open access agreement which enabled other providers to access the network.
- (v) The deadline for obtaining match funding from the Government had passed but Leicestershire County Council believed that the Government would continue to honour its previous commitment to provide match funding for schemes. The recommendations in the Cabinet report included providing delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to enter into an agreement with the other

authorities involved following a value for money assessment. By the time that assessment was carried out the amount of any Government funding would be known.

- (vi) Provision of superfast broadband was not currently required for new housing developments through planning conditions or Section 106 Agreements. The Government expected that market forces would encourage developers to provide this. That tended to be the case for larger developments but not necessarily for smaller ones. The issue could be considered as part of the current review of the Local Plan and the Team Leader for Regeneration and Economic Development undertook to make relevant officers aware that the issue had been raised by the Group.
- (vii) There were advantages to customers and service providers in enabling more transactions to take place online. In particular those related to greater convenience for customers and reduced transaction costs for service providers. This was consistent with the Council's approach to enhancing the ability of customers to access Council services online.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

Scrutiny Committee Procedure 11.12 sets out the procedure by which a report of a scrutiny committee should be considered by the Cabinet.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The information on this in the Cabinet report is not affected by the recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

There are no further financial implications associated with the recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group.

Risk Management

There are no specific risks associated with the recommendation of the Overview Scrutiny Group.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Paper: Overview Scrutiny Group Minute 46 2017/18,
13th November 2017

Officer to contact: Nadia Ansari
Democratic Services Officer
(01509) 634502
nadia.ansari@charnwood.gov.uk