

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET 14TH FEB 2019

SUPERFAST TELFORD BROADBAND PROGRAMME

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR BUSINESS, DEVELOPMENT & EMPLOYMENT

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR HILDA RHODES

PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT

1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

- 1.1. Superfast Telford is the Councils broadband delivery programme which is transforming the way people live, work, learn, socialise and do business. **The first phase was a £5.6 million project led by the Council in partnership with British Telecom (BT)** as part of the National programme managed by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK).
- 1.2. At the end of the three year first phase we are celebrating the **provision of a new network of fibre broadband infrastructure to over 9000 homes and businesses**. The Superfast Telford Programme, combined with commercial delivery has **delivered Superfast fibre at 24 Mbps+ to 98.21% of residents and businesses across the borough. This puts the borough in the top third for coverage across all UK Local Authorities and Regions, and significantly exceeds the national BDUK target of 95%**.
- 1.3. As well as exceeding the national target, **only 1.12% of the borough has less than 15Mbps+ which also exceeds the Government’s national Universal Service Obligation to provide 10Mbps+by 2020**.
- 1.4. **A proactive and imaginative Superfast Telford marketing campaign has kept stakeholders well informed throughout the first phase and encouraged take up** of the new infrastructure by residents and business. The Council is pleased to report that **take up of broadband continues to increase, growing from 34% in May 2018 to 52% currently**.
- 1.5. Lightmoor was one of the first communities to benefit and now over 60% have upgraded. Owen and his family upgraded within a week of the new connection going live. Owen explains:

“Broadband has change our lives, allowing us to entertain ourselves and communicate more easily. It’s also given me the flexibility to work from home.”

One of the latest rural communities to benefit is Kynnersley. Ruth, Parish Chair comments:

“We can now watch films, catch up TV and operate online banking - all things taken for granted by those living in a fibre area. Not to be too dramatic about it but it is like coming out of the dark and into the light.”

- 1.6. Following the success of the first phase, an Open Market Review (OMR) is underway to map any gaps that still exist in provision at a detailed premises level. The OMR is required to inform how the Council can deliver on its ambition of Superfast coverage across the borough for any residents or businesses that want it.
- 1.7. In the interim the Council is ensuring that local funded initiatives already in place, are made available to as many as possible. These include the Marches Business Broadband Grant Scheme.
- 1.8. Local electrical company WES is one of the first to benefit from the Business Broadband Grant Scheme in Telford and Wrekin. Last year they installed a new computer system which is online and are in no doubt improved speeds will help the business grow. Mark, director at WES said:

“The difference between the new superfast connection has made to the company is tremendous – the difference is like night and day.”
- 1.9. The Council will take advantage of national and regional opportunities that will keep the borough at the forefront of connectivity. These include national plans for full fibre and 5G as outlined in the ‘Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review’.
- 1.10. The Council also continues to work with providers and housing developers through the Local Plan to enforce as far as possible the provision of a fibre network in any new builds across the borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Cabinet welcomes the achievement of 98.2% superfast broadband coverage significantly exceeding the national target, and the continued high levels of take up of new infrastructure by residents and businesses across the Borough

3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>Protect and create jobs as a 'Business Supporting, Business Winning Council'</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE	<i>Superfast Telford Programme key dates: Build contract end: March 2024 ERDF Marches Business Broadband Grant Scheme: Dec 2019 RDPE Viable Clusters Project: June 2020 Local Body Partnership: end of 2020</i>	
FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Financial advice and support will continue to be given to the project team. DR 5.2.19
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	There are no additional legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Legal advice and support will continue to be given to the Project team as and when required. EH 11.1.2019
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	<i>Borough-wide impact</i>

PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. INFORMATION

Superfast Telford to date

- 4.1 9,300 properties were identified in the first phase build contract as being eligible for upgrade with new fibre infrastructure. Around 8,800 properties were targeted to receive at least 24Mbps+ (superfast) with the remaining 500 properties receiving an uplift through a fibre connection. Final delivery figures included the removal of just under 150 properties from the contract as they were found to be outside the borough or already receiving direct commercial internet connections.
- 4.2 The programme, which was modelled on a value for money approach, has successfully filled the gap left by commercial operators in those areas where it wasn't economically viable to provide fibre broadband. Across the borough, at the end of the programme, Superfast (24Mbps+) coverage of 98.21% has been achieved. This is above the national target of 95% and exceeds coverage in neighbouring areas like Shropshire and Staffordshire (see table in 4.4 below).
- 4.3 The Councils investment has also delivered a total fibre coverage figure of over 99% (partial/full). Of this, indicators show that the majority will be able to access a fibre connection of at least 15Mbps+. This is above the Government's commitment to provide everyone with at least 10Mbps through the Universal Service Obligation.
- 4.4 This table ¹compares Superfast Coverage (24Mbps+) at the end of Dec 2018:

Place	Superfast Coverage - %
Telford & Wrekin	98.21
UK	95.8
West Midlands	96.95
Gloucestershire	93.35
Herefordshire	86.79
Shropshire	91.17
Staffordshire	95.10

¹ Source: <http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/uk>

- 4.5 In line with the rest of Europe the definition of Superfast is moving now to 30 Mbps+. It is a reflection of the success of the Superfast Telford programme that at the end of December 2018 the borough is 98.03% covered at more than 30 Mbps, so still on target when measured against this higher benchmark speed. The table below reflects Telford's position against all speeds.

Superfast UK (>24 Mbps):	98.21%
Superfast EU (>30 Mbps):	98.03%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps):	79.83%
'Fibre' partial/full at any speed: (FTTC/VDSL/G.fast/Cable/FTTP)	99.34%

- 4.6 Superfast Telford has made a significant impact on the boroughs broadband coverage. However, the Council's ambitions for broadband remain as does its commitment to make a connection available where feasible to any remaining homes and businesses that want it.

Maximising Phase One – Boosting broadband take up

- 4.8 In delivering broadband infrastructure and through effective promotion with the Superfast Telford marketing campaign, the Council has achieved take up across the Borough of 52%. It is expected that take-up will continue as residents or businesses come to the end of existing service contracts and are therefore able to access an improved service.
- 4.9 Marketing and communications will continue to target residents and businesses in areas where delivery has been completed in order to generate take up, particularly in those areas where it is low.
- 4.10 The website **www.superfast-telford.co.uk** will continue to be the main source of information during the programme. This will be supported with press and PR, e-marketing, and direct mail. The website is currently being updated so that messaging is streamlined and focussed on the benefits of Superfast with illustrative case studies. It will also provide more information on what support or options are available for those not served by either the programme or commercially.

Future proofing the investment made as the borough continues to grow

- 4.11 The current figures from the premise level OMR indicate that there are around 84,000 homes and businesses in the borough (75,237 properties were in the original project scope for the build phase). So far 98% has been maintained despite the increase in the number of premises over the last 4 years (when the data was originally sourced).
- 4.12 It's important to try and maintain the high level of broadband coverage as the borough continues to be one of the fastest growing places in the Midlands. House builders in our area need to work with providers to ensure that fibre broadband provision is in place on all new developments. The Council continues to influence this by reinforcing the message through the local plan but it is essential that Government makes the provision of full fibre broadband compulsory for all new builds.
- 4.13 The Council has already invested in and supported a number of additional initiatives which are currently in place addressing the gap in coverage for a fibre grade solution. They include the following:-

Marches Business Broadband Grant Scheme (European Structural Investment Funds)

- Grants up to £25,000 for business grade connection
- Delivered by December 2019
- Total fund available for eligible SME businesses in Telford & Wrekin is £235k

Marches Viable Clusters Broadband Project (European Structural Investment Funds)

- £215,000 fully funded grant for Telford & Wrekin
- To cover eligible community clusters (currently being identified)
- Delivered by June 2020

National Better Broadband Scheme

- £350 subsidy for those receiving less than 2Mbps+
- Extended up to December 2019

National Gigabit Voucher Scheme

- A subsidy of £2.5k for small businesses and the local communities surrounding them
- Contributes towards the installation cost of a gigabit capable connection

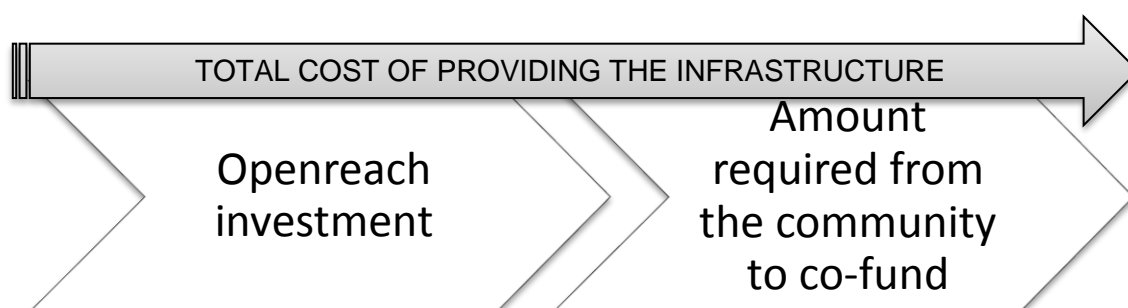
Community Fibre Partnerships (CFP)

- A mechanism whereby remaining communities not included in fibre roll-out plans can co-fund an infrastructure upgrade
- BT/Openreach invest to a level that is commercially viable for them

- 4.14 These initiatives will still leave a small gap in provision (which needs to be confirmed through the OMR results) and in order to meet the Council's commitment to make a connection available where feasible to any remaining home or business that wants.

Local Body Partnership

- 4.15 A Local Body Partnership is an option which could be pursued once the gap analysis is completed. This would use the Community Fibre Partnership model which is based on co-funding with the community and Openreach. See diagram below:-



- 4.16 Subject to gap analysis promotion of such a scheme could start during summer 2019 with a view to establishing a pipeline of build by the end of the year, ready to start delivery in spring 2020.

National Pipeline Initiatives

- 4.17 There are national initiatives in the pipeline that can also be leveraged to help address the gap across the borough, these include:-
- i) Universal Service Obligation
 - By 2020 all premises with speeds below 10Mbps will be able to request a speed upgrade, subject to a proposed cost cap of £3,400.
 - Premises which are unable to be reached within this level will have the option of paying the excess costs, or alternatively having a fall back solution such as satellite.
 - Ofcom's modelling suggests that approximately 0.2% of UK premises will be over the cost cap.
 - The Council will look at the opportunities that come out of this commitment from government for those that can benefit.

Other Opportunities

- 4.18 The Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review sets national targets for the availability of full fibre and 5G networks. These include 15 million premises connected to full fibre by 2025, with coverage across all parts of the country by 2033. There is also a commitment to the majority of the population having 5G coverage by 2027.
- 4.19 The Council is in talks with the West Midlands Combined Authority to review the potential for Telford to work with the CA on extending digital infrastructure linked with the recently announced news that the West Midlands has been selected to become the innovative home to the UK's first multi-city 5G test bed. The multi million pound trial of new high speed connectivity will pave the way for the future rollout of 5G across the UK, making the region the first in the UK ready to trial new 5G applications and services at scale.

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

N/A

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

Cabinet meeting held on 31 May 2018: Minute number CB-184

Cabinet meeting held on 21 July 2016: Minute number CB-018

Cabinet meeting held on 19 March 2015: Minute number CB-111

Cabinet meeting held on 24 July 2014: Minute number CB-23

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

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APPENDICES

CASE STUDY 1: Over 60% of the Lightmoor community have now upgraded to fibre broadband



Case Study

Over 60% of the Lightmoor community have now upgraded to fibre broadband, thanks to Superfast Telford

Superfast fibre broadband has transformed the way Lightmoor residents can now use the Internet in their homes. Over 60% of residents who can now access faster broadband have upgraded - making it the highest take up area for fibre broadband in the borough so far.

One resident has told us what difference faster internet has made for his family where speeds were previously around 0.5mbps.

What was the solution?

Superfast Telford the council's £5.6m broadband programme. The programme has given broadband access to over 9,000 homes and businesses that would not have benefitted through commercial provision.

What have the faster broadband speeds meant for the the family?

Owen and his family upgraded to Superfast fibre within a week of the new connection being made live. The previously low internet speeds in Lightmoor had made things like working from home, watching Netflix and online gaming impossible. They would resort to using

their mobile phone around the home for a better internet connect which of course meant increasing bills due to higher data usage.

However, since the upgrade to fibre broadband the family can now get internet speeds of around 30mbps. This now reliable broadband connection allows Owen to work from home as well as having the ability to stream television, music and use multiple devices in the home at the same time.

“ Broadband has changed our lives, allowing us to entertain ourselves and communicate more easily. It's also given me the flexibility to work from home – so when I need to be on hand for my kids I can be.

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Case Study

Superfast Broadband speeds reach Kynnersley thanks to Superfast Telford

The Kynnersley community of Telford and Wrekin are one of the latest rural communities in the borough to benefit from new faster broadband speeds. Over 98% of homes and businesses in the borough have now got access to superfast fibre broadband and for those in the remaining 2%, there are other options available.

What was the solution?

Superfast Telford the council's £5.8m broadband programme, which has given broadband access to over 9,000 homes and businesses that would not have benefited through commercial provision.

What difference do the broadband speeds mean for the people of Kynnersley?

The difference between no fibre broadband and having the provision is immeasurable. In terms of the community's access to even the most basic information

available from the world wide web these days, Superfast Telford enables households and businesses to operate effectively on a day to day basis.

“ We can now watch films, catch up TV, operate online banking and much more – all things taken for granted in a fibre area.

Not to be too dramatic about it but it is like coming out of the dark into the light.

It has also given residents a greater choice of provider, having previously been forced to use other limited technology at a higher cost.”



CASE STUDY 3: Superfast broadband speeds helps to boost productivity for local Telford company



Case Study

Superfast Broadband speeds helps to boost productivity for local Telford company

WES, a Telford electrical company, was experiencing very slow broadband speeds at around 1.6mb. This made the simplest of tasks like downloading email data extremely difficult for the business.

What was the solution?

The company was successful in applying for £12,000 from the Marches and Gloucestershire Business Broadband Grant Scheme, funded by EREDF, to boost its internet connection.

As a result broadband speeds increased from around 1.6mb to 30mb.

What have the faster broadband speeds meant for the business?

Last year WES installed a new computer system which means all servers are now stored online. WES believe there is no doubt these better broadband speeds will help the business to grow. Operations are already smoother and there have been improved communications between the business and its customers and suppliers.



Picture: WES director Mark Robinson

“ Mark Shaw told me all about the scheme and because of the slow speeds we had been experiencing I was immediately interested. The difference the new superfast connection has made to the company is tremendous - the difference is 'like night and day'.

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