

## CABINET – 23 SEPTEMBER 2014

### PROCEDURAL MATTERS

#### **Members' Questions**

<b>Question (1) from Mrs Hazel Watson (Dorking Hills) to ask:</b>
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In May 2013 the Cabinet launched the high profile roll-out of the Surrey Superfast broadband programme, claiming that 99% of Surrey premises would receive fibre-based broadband by the end of 2014 and that 94% of these premises would achieve Superfast Broadband speeds of 15Mb or more.

The fibre-based technology is now being rolled out through the commercial roll-out programme and the Surrey Superfast Broadband programme and many users in village centres and rural hamlets, as well as isolated rural properties, in both the commercial and Surrey Superfast Broadband rollout areas are finding that they cannot achieve Superfast Broadband speeds of 15 Mb or more if they live half a mile or more from their local fibre-enabled cabinet. It is becoming apparent that this is arising as a result of the length of copper wire through which the superfast broadband service has to pass from the fibre-enabled broadband cabinet to reach these premises.

Given the high profile that the administration has attributed to the roll-out of Superfast Broadband in Surrey and this emerging issue that is likely to mean that the targets set will not be met, what actions will the Cabinet be taking and what solutions will the Cabinet be seeking to provide to ensure that the target of 94% of Surrey premises will receive superfast broadband by the end of 2014?

#### **Reply:**

Surrey County Council is aiming to ensure that more than 99% of Surrey residents and businesses are covered by the fibre broadband network by the end of 2014 - making it one of the best connected counties in the UK.

To achieve this ambition, the Superfast Surrey Broadband Programme contract is deploying fibre broadband infrastructure to 84,000 premises (about 20% of the premises in the county) that were excluded from the commercial fibre broadband rollouts by BT or Virgin Media. The programme is on target to achieve this. When this is complete there will still remain a small number premises that are very hard to reach and where costs exceeds cost thresholds that are already significantly higher than the commercial deployment area.

The Superfast Surrey deployment area (known as the Intervention Area or IA) has a target to ensure that the fibre network will cover 98.6% of IA premises. The 94% figure that is referenced in the question relates to the 93.9% (78,800 premises) that will be able to achieve a minimum download speed of 15Mbps in the IA.

The programme is on target to deliver the 93.9% of premises within the IA able to obtain a minimum download speed of 15Mbps, with the vast majority able to achieve much higher speeds. The Superfast Surrey Programme team constantly monitors the status of the deployment using a contractually agreed reporting mechanism.

The contract targets do allow for as much as 6.1% (5,100) of premises to have speeds

below 15Mbps. The principal factor determining the distribution of the slower speeds is the length of the telephone line between the cabinet and the end user premises. This has resulted in a slightly higher proportion of slower speeds in the more rural Boroughs and Districts.

For all the sub 15 Mbps premises within the IA, Openreach is currently undertaking a review to identify what, if any, improvements can be made within the constraints of cost and technical feasibility. Superfast Surrey will be reviewing the costed options and determining where additional deployment can be undertaken. Once both the results of the analysis are known and the programme team have determined where improvements can be undertaken within the available budget, the relevant parish councils will be updated and will be requested to convey this information to their communities.

These issues also affect residents within the larger Commercial roll out area. The Council is aware of this and that some cabinets in the commercial area are not yet fibre enabled. The Superfast Surrey Programme is subject to state aid funding regulations that prevents the programme targeting any improvements or deployment within the commercial rollout areas. The Programme therefore has no oversight of the commercial programme and does not have any data source to inform them of actual speeds being achieved there. However Surrey County Council is pressing BT senior management both directly and through Government to improve performance and to complete its commercial programme as soon as possible.

The rollout of fibre to enable as many homes and businesses as possible to access broadband is a large and complex engineering project. Nearly 400,000 metres of fibre cable is being deployed to reach 84,000 premises - nearly equivalent to the distance from Dorking to Durham. Some 30 exchanges, not covered by the commercial programme have been upgraded and some 620 green street-side cabinets will be installed. This is a technology that will continue to evolve over the coming years, and by extending the fibre network as far as possible we are ensuring that our residents will have access to new technologies and services as they become available.

**Mr Peter Martin**  
**Deputy Leader**  
**23 September 2014**