



## Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee

5 December 2012

### Superfast Broadband

#### **Purpose of the report:** Policy Development and Review

To scrutinise implementation of the Superfast Broadband contract, including details of the proposed governance arrangements and organisation structure for the Joint Operations Centre, and delivery arrangements.

#### **Introduction:**

1. Surrey County Council signed a contract with BT on 12 September to extend their fibre-based superfast broadband network to nearly 100% of homes and businesses in the county. This £33 million contract will make Surrey the best connected county in the UK.
2. However, as Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are already aware, the project has been waiting for European State Aid approval before implementation can begin.
3. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update following the briefing that was put forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in October.

#### **State Aid**

4. SCC has now received state aid approval for the Superfast Surrey project to bring superfast broadband to all Surrey communities.
5. The decision, announced by the Government agency Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) today, paves the way for essential survey work to begin to make the project a reality. This work will enable deployment schedules to be finalised and the council will be able to announce in February 2013 when superfast broadband will be available to each area.

6. State aid regulations are put in place by the European Commission to prevent the commercial market from distortion by the public sector. The Superfast Surrey project sits within these regulations and must ensure that it is only spending public money to provide superfast fibre broadband to those areas that cannot access it through the commercial market.
7. BDUK, part of the Department for Culture Media and Sport, has agreed a system of national state aid notification with the European Commission and obtained delegated authority to approve UK local broadband projects. Negotiations between BDUK and the Commission had been delayed but approval for Surrey's project was given on 21 November 2012.

### **Next Steps**

8. BT are now able to carry out detailed survey work in order to finalise the deployment schedule. The infrastructure will be rolled out by quarters and the deployment schedule will be divided into phases with each phase focussing on different areas of the county. For each phase there will be detailed planning, infrastructure build and related demand stimulation activities.
9. In early 2013 the project will be in a position to publish when and where superfast broadband will be available. The project team is planning a launch event for February/ March next year to mark the start of implementation, to release the deployment schedule and to increase awareness of the project, the technology and how deployment will work.
10. This is a complex engineering project that specifically targets hard-to-reach parts of the county. BT's experience doing similar work around the UK suggests that it is impossible to predict what the situation is like underground until they get there, for example whether the ducting for the cable is missing or has collapsed. As the detailed planning is carried out for each phase, we will be in a position to release more specific information including the exact date for 'accepting orders' and the technology to be deployed.
11. Under the contract, BT will deploy their standard Next Generation Access (NGA) network to 99.7% of premises in Surrey. The remaining 0.3% will fall into the 'infill deployment plan' and we will look at alternative superfast broadband solutions for these premises. Both BT and Surrey County Council have ring-fenced funding to support this workstream.
12. As the detailed planning work is completed for each phase, any premises in the area that are too difficult to reach via BT's standard deployment will be indentified. It is known that these are likely to be scattered across Surrey rather than comprise whole areas or divisions. The project team will look to work with these individuals and the local Member to develop the best option for them.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Committee is asked to comment on the Superfast Broadband Report and make any recommendations as appropriate.

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