

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PARISH COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. **5**

meeting date: THURSDAY, 27th MARCH 2014
 title: SUPERFAST BROADBAND UPDATE
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide an update on the proposed Fibre Broadband services available through BT/Openreach commercial rollout and its effect in the Ribble Valley.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – Delivery of services to all.
- Corporate Priorities – the implementation of superfast broadband and improved speeds for broadband where superfast is not available will assist in sustaining a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley.
- Other Considerations – The achievement of a competitive and sustainable economy will be created for the Borough of Ribble Valley, providing opportunities for employment and continuous business development

2 INFORMATION

2.1 High speed fibre broadband is being rolled out across Lancashire between 2013 and the end of 2015

2.2 The network will be delivered in seven phases and the first phase has now been delivered and completion is expected by the end of quarter 4 2014-2015 (January-March 2015)

2.3 Phase 1 has delivered coverage in Blackburn, Burnley, Caton, Chatburn, Forton, Galgate, Lancaster, Leyland and Preston.

2.5 In total it is anticipated that the programme will assist up to 355 businesses through a practical programme of one to one and group coaching on the business benefits. This support will initially be targeted at six ERDF preferred targets which include:

- Biomedical
- Energy and Environmental Technologies
- Advanced Engineering and Materials
- Food and Drink
- Digital and Creative and Business
- Professional Services
- and/or be classified as a high growth firm.

- 2.6 The benefits will also be felt across many other businesses who either do not complete the full business support programme, or use some of the freely available content on Superfast Lancashire website.
- 2.7 For businesses it's the upload speeds that really make a difference. Superfast broadband enables small businesses to work faster and more efficiently, reducing the need to travel. Having faster upload and download speeds also means small businesses can benefit from job creation and business expansion.
- 2.8 All timescales are indicative and subject to detailed network planning and survey. Residents and users can access www.superfastlancashire.com to keep up-to-date on rollout plans.

3 IMPLICATIONS FOR RIBBLE VALLEY

- 3.1 Around 40% of premises in the Ribble Valley will receive Fibre Broadband services through the BT/Openreach commercial rollout. This is predominantly through the Clitheroe and Longridge exchanges.
- 3.2 The villages of Chatburn and Sawley have seen the arrival of high-speed fibre broadband into their villages and the completion of the engineering works means that most of the 500 premises in Chatburn and 150 premises in Sawley, are now able to connect to high speed fibre broadband.
- 3.2 Approximately 50% of premises in Ribble Valley should receive coverage under the Superfast Lancashire public/private partnership programme, served by exchanges in Chatburn where work is now complete, Mellor (mid 2014), Padiham (late 2014), Whalley (late 2014) and Wilpshire (mid 2014). Some coverage will also be provided in the most rural exchanges in Chipping (late 2014), Dunsop Bridge (mid 2014) and Bolton-by-Bowland (mid 2014).
- 3.3 All remaining premises will be guaranteed at least a stable 2Mbit/s service by the end of the rollout programme in early 2015 subject to the necessary planning and survey work being carried out successfully.
- 3.4 It is however at this point worth pointing out that whilst the Superfast Lancashire project does aim to extend high-speed broadband to 97 percent of the county's homes and businesses by the end of 2015, this does still leave 3% of businesses and homes without access to a high speed broadband service.
- 3.5 The 3% of businesses unable to access high speed broadband will predominantly be in the rural areas and concern is still being expressed by businesses that the download speeds they are currently achieving are not sufficient for them to successfully run their businesses.
- 3.6 Many rural businesses are having to find alternative solutions for their broadband requirements which unfortunately come at a much higher cost than a connection through BT. It is important therefore that we continue to support businesses in our rural areas to ensure that they have the ability to access sufficient broadband speeds and that financial support is available to enable them to do this.

3.7 The current Rural Development Programme came to an end in 2013 with the next programme not due to be launched until 2015. Discussions are currently taking place as to how the new round of funding under this scheme will be delivered and we continue to lobby for broadband issues to be included as part of the programme and for financial support to be offered to existing businesses who require a better broadband connection with which to run their businesses.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 That Committee note the report.



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