

Agenda Item:

Economic Growth and Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Dorset County Council

Date of Meeting	15 June 2016
Officer	Penny Syddall
Subject of Report	Procedure for Petitions - Petition for Superfast Broadband for Pulham and Surrounding Areas
Executive Summary	<p>A petition has been received (in accordance with the County Council's published petitions scheme) in relation to superfast broadband for Pulham.</p> <p>The scheme states that If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be reported by the Chairman to the relevant Council committee.</p> <p>It is for the Committee to decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting.</p>
Impact Assessment:	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment:</p> <p>The Superfast Dorset programme has been subject to an equalities impact assessment, which confirmed the positive impact that improved broadband will have. The assessment noted that some hard to reach areas may not achieve significant speed uplifts - these will tend to be in the most rural parts of the county.</p>
	<p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>Open market and public consultation to determine broadband delivery by infrastructure providers and define areas for gap</p>

	<p>funding - the “intervention area”.</p> <p>Superfast Dorset contract with BT to provide superfast broadband to 95% of premises in Dorset has been used in writing this report.</p>
	<p>Budget/ Risk Assessment:</p> <p>No budget is directly committed in this report. Any divergence from the contractual agreement as a result of this or any future petitions would disadvantage other parishes that did not submit a petition.</p> <p>The level of residual risk is considered to be LOW.</p>
Recommendation	The Committee is invited to note the receipt of this petition and decide how to respond to it.
Reason for recommendation	In order to comply with the County Council’s published scheme for responding to petitions and so as to enable local people to connect with local elected decision makers.
Background Papers	Dorset County Council Petitions Scheme Superfast Dorset Action Plan
Appendices	None
Report Originator and Contact	<p>Name: Penny Syddall</p> <p>Tel: p.syddall@dorsetcc.gov.uk</p> <p>Email: 01305 225065</p>

1. Background to the Petition Scheme

- 1.1 The County Council's Petitions Scheme (based on the national model) was adopted on 29 April 2010 and came into effect on 15 June 2010.
- 1.2 If a petition is supported by 50 or more signatories then it will be reported by the Chairman to the relevant Council committee. If a petition is supported by 1,000 or more signatories it will be scheduled for a debate at the next meeting of the full County Council.

2. Petition - Superfast broadband for Pulham

- 2.1 Dorset County Council received a petition of 96 signatures from Mr Mark Vye on 2 June 2016. It reads:

It is now clear that Pulham is not included in the current plan (out to 2017) for the installation of superfast broadband after correspondence with the Superfast Dorset and the MP for North Dorset, Simon Hoare.

Pulham must be included in the installation of superfast broadband fibre optic in the current 2017 plan.

Further notes from Mr Vye:

Proposals/information requirements and requests to be developed and presented at the EGOSC

- The petition asks that Pulham should be included in the 2016 plan, as advertised, having been slipped from 2015 and that at minimum:

‘Pulham must be included in the installation of Superfast Broadband fibre optic in the current 2017 plan.’
 - The difference in the cable between Hazelbury Bryan and King's Stag and the purpose of the cable from King's Stag to East Pulham at KW Autos are yet to be established.
 - What are the commercial/technical criteria for inclusion/exclusion in the roll out plans?
 - Why is Pulham (amongst others) not named/included/mentioned on the list of villages on the N Dorset progress page of the Dorset for You Superfast web site? What are/were the criteria for inclusion/exclusion?
 - What compliance/quality/assurance checks are in place? Who is in control of this roll out – Openreach, Superfast Dorset or the elected Council?
 - That Councillors develop a collective scrutiny action to address the provision of fibre optic cable to the rural environment and compliance/quality/ assurance, not just ‘not spots’.
- 2.2 As this petition contains more than 50 signatures, the Committee is invited to note and discuss this.

- 2.3 This discussion should conclude with a decision as to how to respond to the petition. This may include:
- taking the action requested in the petition
 - holding an inquiry into the matter
 - undertaking research into the matter
 - holding a public meeting
 - holding a consultation
 - holding a meeting with petitioners
 - referring the petition for consideration by the council's audit and scrutiny committee
 - calling a referendum
 - writing to the petition organiser setting out our views about the request in the petition
- 2.4 Alternatively, the Council may determine a combination of the options above, or decide on another course of action as appropriate.

3. Context

- 3.1 Universal provision of superfast broadband is critical to the future economic and social prosperity of the county of Dorset. The Superfast Dorset programme aims to deliver the most appropriate superfast broadband solution for communities, maximising benefits in a cost effective manner across the business and domestic community.
- 3.2 Across the project area, Dorset Bournemouth and Poole the outcomes are modelled on the basis of maximising coverage for the available budget. The plans are produced by BT based on value for money considerations and deployment of the infrastructure for Superfast Dorset is implemented in accordance with the Implementation Plan and Project Plan, agreed as part of the contract between the Superfast Dorset funding partnership and BT, signed on 10 July 2013, and as amended from time to time through agreed change control processes.
- 3.3 The current Superfast Dorset contract is to reach 95% of the premises in Dorset, including Bournemouth and Poole. It also takes into consideration the premises already served with superfast access through the previous rollout by the commercial providers.
- 3.4 This is a significant step-change in superfast broadband availability in Dorset with levels of predicted coverage higher than most other equivalent programmes nationally. Although Dorset is well-placed, the headline percentages risk masking a problem in our most rural of areas, due to already very high levels of coverage in the urban conurbation of Bournemouth and Poole.
- 3.5 The Superfast Dorset team has had various communication with Mr Vye in Pulham over the past six months or so.

The team has explained that current plans are to provide superfast broadband to East Pulham but not to the main village of Pulham. He has been informed that residents with speeds below 2Mbps can apply for a subsidised connection to satellite or wireless service through the Basic Broadband Scheme and that a local operator has network nearby.

The rollout is planned by Openreach against value for money criteria determined by Superfast Dorset. The aim has been to connect as many properties to the network as possible within the available funding.

The map is clearly marked as indicative only. It is made clear that plans change. Changes occur when further information comes to light through the detailed surveys.

Pulham was included as an area on the guidance map where service was indicated subject to detailed surveys. Because it is so close to an area that remains in current plans, Superfast Dorset has asked Openreach to explore the possibility of extending service to Pulham. The additional cost could be met by dropping another area from the rollout.

Pulham is not included in the list of villages as this details where service has been provided.

3.6 Following previous petitions from hard to reach communities like this, the Environment Overview Committee set up a members' Task and Finish group which made recommendations to the committee in February.

Recommendations included:

- That a comprehensive analysis of superfast broadband “not-spots” across the county is carried out, detailing communities, clusters of properties and isolated properties
- That the Superfast Dorset team continues to work with the supplier to ensure solutions deliver value for money in order to maximise the potential underspend for reinvestment
- That additional funding opportunities are pursued, including the part that the South West Ultrafast Fund will play in this.

3.7 These recommendations have been incorporated into the Superfast Dorset action plan. Progress against these actions is shown in the following chart.

That a comprehensive analysis of superfast broadband “not-spots” across the county is carried out, detailing communities, clusters of properties and isolated properties.	Estimated completion date end June 2016 – will be informed by updated data on Superfast Dorset rollout and from commercial suppliers through Open Market Review and Public Consultation
That the Superfast Dorset team continues to work with the supplier to ensure solutions deliver value for money in order to maximise the potential underspend for reinvestment - it is understood that additional investment will be available for further delivery at the end of the current deployment period, ie into 2018.	£1.8m of early gainshare and unallocated sums being modelled for extra coverage. State aid public consultation on intervention area complete 15/4/16.
That the Task and Finish Group supports actively pursuing the benefits of a marketing action plan with all of the strategic stakeholders for the development of a business case for revenue funding of activities that will drive greater take-up, from 19% to 50%.	Current take up 24%. Revenue support to expand programme to reach Govt target of 50% take-up is proving problematic
That additional funding opportunities are pursued, including the part that the South West Ultrafast Fund will play in this.	On-going, partly addressed through ultrafast programme

<p>Should additional funding be available, market engagement and open procurement should be a requirement to maximise competition, drive value for money and innovative solutions. Any alternative solution must be demonstrably no more expensive in on-going user costs than mainstream commercial offerings and must have no greater restrictions on volume of use and on hospitality to future extension.</p>	<p>Ultrafast programme to be procured through open procurement, in compliance with DCMS's National Broadband Scheme</p>
<p>That Dorset's Digital Infrastructure Strategy is used to gain traction with the Dorset LEP and other stakeholders to provide a strategic base for actions in the medium term to develop a digital Dorset and maximise economic growth and prosperity.</p>	<p>EOI for growth deal 3 submitted. Dorset LEP partnering in funding and delivery of Ultrafast programme</p>

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 This report alerts the Committee to the petition and proposes a response.
- 4.2 The Economic Growth and Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognises that some communities and individual residential and business premises will not be provided with superfast broadband coverage through current contracts. Residents and businesses with less than 2Mbps can apply for a subsidised connection through the Basic Broadband Scheme.
- 4.3 The Superfast Dorset map is indicative only and may be subject to change.
- 4.4 Superfast Dorset team continues to explore all options to access further funding to extend superfast coverage to the final 3-5%, including supporting marketing activities to increase take-up to ensure gainshare opportunities are maximised.

Matthew Piles

Head of Economy

June 2016