

# Environment, Development and Transport Committee

Item No.

<b>Report title:</b>	<b>Better Broadband for Norfolk Programme update</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>11 November 2016</b>
<b>Responsible Chief Officer:</b>	<b>Tom McCabe - Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services</b>
<b>Strategic impact</b>  The first Better Broadband for Norfolk (BBfN) rollout completed on time, exceeded the contracted number of properties due to receive access to Superfast broadband (24Mbps+) by over 1,000 properties and costs were £10 million less than expected.	

## **Executive summary**

Part one of the second Better Broadband for Norfolk rollout has commenced and the contract has been extended to provide access for 95% of Norfolk properties by the end of March 2020.

This report describes progress against delivery of contractual commitments and explores issues regarding Take-up of superfast broadband services.

### **Recommendations:**

**Consider progress to date and particularly levels of Take-up of fibre services versus levels of availability.**

## **1. Proposal**

- 1.1. BT report progress against contractual measures each quarter. Information is provided during the second month following the quarter end, NCC then validates the information before confirming contractual commitments have been met. For example, this report covers the reporting period ending June 2016, at which point 86% of Norfolk properties had access.
- 1.2. At the end of June, Take-up of services using the infrastructure which was implemented as part of the first Better Broadband for Norfolk contract was 32% - which means that a significant proportion of Norfolk properties had not taken a Superfast service even though one was available. This report explores the potential reasons.
- 1.3. An independent website "Think Broadband" provides levels of coverage for Norfolk as a whole, at District or Parliamentary Constituency level. It also demonstrates the average speed available in Norfolk, versus the speeds actually being used. Some of the reasons for the difference between availability and Take-up of Superfast services are explored later in this report.

## 2. Evidence

- 2.1. Contract 1 implemented 680 fibre cabinets across Norfolk between July 2013 and September 2015 which serve 42% of Norfolk properties.

This second contract is almost twice as large requiring over 1,100 fibre structures across Norfolk, to serve approximately one quarter as many Norfolk's properties (11%) as the first contract.

This table shows information reported via the contract at the end of June 2016 which demonstrates progress in delivering the second contract. The rollout began in December 2015 and will be completed at the end of March 2020. The table is based on speeds of 15Mbps+ (although the majority of properties have access to speeds above 24Mbps) which is the speed above which State Aid rules prevent the deliberate use of public subsidy.

AVAILABLE FROM COMMERCIALY FUNDED ROLLOUTS	42%
AVAILABLE VIA BETTER BROADBAND FOR NORFOLK CONTRACT 1	42%
DELIVERED VIA CONTRACT 2 (End June 2016)	2%
WILL BE DELIVERED BY THE END OF CONTRACT 2 (June 2020)	9%
NO FIBRE SOLUTION PLANNED	5%
<b>TOTAL COVERAGE AT 15MBPS+ (June 2016)</b>	<b>86%</b>

- 2.2. The following information is from the independent website Think Broadband <http://labs.thinkbroadband.com/local/index.php?area=E10000020> showing coverage in Norfolk. A range of speeds are reported, the two key UK government measures are 24Mbps+ and the percentage of properties with access to a speed of less than 2Mbps

Think Broadband			
Superfast UK (>24 Mbps):	85.64%	Below 2 Mbps (USC):	1.59%
Superfast EU (>30 Mbps):	84.65%	Below 10 Mbps (USO):	8.85%
Openreach (>30 Mbps):	84.12%	Below 15 Mbps:	11.55%
Ultrafast (>100 Mbps):	26.58%	Virgin Media Cable:	26.55%
Openreach FTTP (Native):	0.04%	FTTP or FTTH	0.04%

- 2.3. The Think Broadband site also demonstrated the average speed that lines in Norfolk supported was 80Mbps, whereas the average speed that people were using was 19Mbps. A similar pattern exists across the UK, there are several

potential reasons including:

- People don't know Superfast services are available. People can check to see current coverage and future plans using their postcode at: [www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk](http://www.betterbroadbandnorfolk.co.uk)
- Some people don't realise they need to contact their Internet Service Provider (ISP), or another, when superfast infrastructure is installed. There are over 100 ISPs offering Superfast services, people can check availability and costs using the comparison websites on the Ofcom webpage- <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/costs-and-billing/price-comparison>
- People may feel the superfast services will be more expensive. This is often not the case. There are often good deals available and people can shop around every time their contract comes up for renewal to ensure they always have the best value deal available
- Some people already have reasonable speeds (up to 20Mbps) via copper lines. If the speed meets peoples' needs they may not swap.

2.4. Take-up of superfast services is very important, both because it allows residents and businesses to take advantage of the many benefits that it can offer, but also because for every property which takes a superfast service package, BBfN "claws back" a rebate from BT. Councilors have already confirmed that any clawback will be invested to move towards achieving access for 100% of Norfolk properties.

2.5. The Better Broadband for Norfolk website was re-launched in early November. It aims to ensure people can easily find out if superfast broadband is available now, or planned. It also helps people to find out what packages are available from which Internet Service Providers. Work has begun to analyse the areas with lower levels of Take-up in order to take steps to encourage more.

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1. The higher Take-up of fibre services is, the larger the rebate from BT that will be available to invest in more Superfast infrastructure for Norfolk.

### **4. Issues, risks and innovation**

4.1. Risks have been identified and managed using the Corporate Risk Management Framework. The BBfN Steering Group reviews programme risks and proposed mitigations.

### **5. Background**

5.1. County Councilors identified that the lack of broadband infrastructure disadvantages large parts of Norfolk both economically and socially. This is identified in the Council's Economic Growth Strategy as key infrastructure to support economic development. It is now also identified as a Norfolk "Vital Sign".

5.2. Better Broadband for Norfolk contracts are managed within nationally agreed

contract management and assurance processes.

## **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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