

Minutes of a special joint meeting of the **PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding on Wednesday 21 March 2012.

PRESENT

Councillors:

B Alcock	M Howard	M D Seymour
G R Aley	J King	E Sneath
D Ashby	A Miller	D A Tennant
F Biggadike	R Perkins	D J Wilkinson
C J T H Brewis	A Puttick	S Wilkinson
A Casson	R M Rudkin	A R Woolf
A Harrison		

Officers: The Assistant Director (Democratic Services), the Economic Development Officer and the Principal Member Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M D Booth, S M Booth, R Clark, A M Newton and S Slade.

388. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE DURATION OF THE JOINT MEETING**

Consideration was given as to who should preside over the special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel.

DECISION: That Councillor A Puttick act as Chairman for the duration of the special joint meeting of the Performance Monitoring Panel and the Policy Development Panel.

389. **LINCOLNSHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Economic Development Manager which informed members of a request for a financial contribution to the Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Superfast Broadband project. A presentation was also received from David O'Connor (Executive Director – Performance and Governance) and Judith Hetherington Smith (Chief Information Officer) from Lincolnshire County Council which provided members with current information on the project.

As part of the comprehensive spending review, the Government had announced its vision for the UK to have the best superfast broadband network in Europe by 2015. The first part of this vision was that at least 90% of UK premises would have superfast broadband and remaining premises would have a minimum of 2Mbps, and to that end had committed £530million to support the rollout of superfast broadband by Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK).

On 8 July 2011, LCC agreed in principle to provide £10million match funding for the Lincolnshire Broadband Delivery Plan to BDUK. In August 2011, the Government announced their national funding allocations which included £14.3million for Lincolnshire. The District Councils were being asked for a contribution to make up the shortfall of £4million (the difference between the £10million committed by LCC, £300,000 from ERDF and the £14.3million from BDUK).

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389. **LINCOLNSHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT** (Continued)

A commitment to match fund the national allocation was required by BDUK. Their model predicted that public investment of £28.6million, together with private investment, would achieve the national target. So far, £10million of funding had been secured from LCC together with £300,000 of European funding (ERDF). Three potential sources were being pursued to fund the £4million gap – NHS/United Lincolnshire Hospitals Trust, District Councils and ERDF. Recent discussions suggested that a further £1.3million - £1.6million could be available from ERDF. If a bid for extra funding was successful and could be spent by 2015, the requirement from local sources would fall to around £2.7million - £3million, however it would be some months before this could be confirmed.

Areas of market failure, classed as 'white areas' for the purposes of State Aid, were eligible for investment. A potential equitable split by district could be the proportion of premises in each white area. The latest figures from BDUK in October 2011 showed that there were 198,540 white area premises in Lincolnshire of which 30,124 (15.2%) were in South Holland. Thus the maximum contribution from South Holland to secure the BDUK 2015 target would be £606,910 and the minimum would be £409,670. Draw down of funds could be phased between 2013 and 2015.

Following the presentation, members raised the following issues which were answered by the officers from LCC.

- Would it make any difference if areas had cabling that was overhead rather than underground?
 - No, it would not make a difference to the provision to properties. It was up to the supplier how to provide the superfast broadband. The programme's role was to specify outcomes, not the way in which these were met (i.e. the technology).
- How many of the white area premises within South Holland were businesses?
 - The officers did not have these figures with them, but would provide the information to members the next day.
- A number of places within the area were close to large town/cities outside of the South Holland area (e.g. Peterborough, Kings Lynn). Could work be undertaken with them, even if they were out of the area?
 - Yes, it would be possible to patch into national infrastructures. Procurement could be undertaken across geographical boundaries.
- How could outcomes be measured and was there any redress if they were not achieved?
 - A range of outcomes were specified in the Local Broadband Plan to which SHDC had contributed. Outcomes could be tested and measured e.g. the number of older people using technology, as well as measuring the speed delivered to sample premises.
- When the work had been undertaken, what guarantees would there be that the technology would be robust and would last?
 - The pre-qualification process was being managed by BDUK in establishing the framework agreement that local authorities would procure from, and the providers would all be multi-national companies.

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389. **LINCOLNSHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT** (Continued)

- Members had been advised that BT already had plans to upgrade the Spalding exchange to superfast broadband towards the end of 2012, and Holbeach sometime in 2012 (these two exchanges covered a large proportion of South Holland). Would these upgrades still be taking place if the project went ahead?
 - The latest plans of suppliers would affect white areas and so the amounts from contributors; these would be made available during the procurement process.
- If the District did not contribute to the project, would it fail?
 - No, the County project was not dependant on all districts contributing and if the District did not contribute, it would not mean that the project would fail. However, the District did need to be aware that if it did not contribute, it would not have a voice in the governance and procurement, so specific local needs may not be met. It would also not benefit from the additional benefits of any further funding brought in. Members were advised however that contributions from authorities would not be determined until the procurement stage.
- What was the percentage of the South Holland area receiving less than 2Mbps.
 - The officers did not have these figures with them, but would provide the information to members the next day.
- In the past, the main issue in the area with regard to faster connection speeds had been the old copper wire technology from the exchange to the premises. Would this still be an issue?
 - Until the procurement had been undertaken, it would not be clear how many properties would be able to receive super fast broadband speeds. 90% was the minimum target. The project would make investment in this area more affordable than previously, and therefore more viable, but it would not solve all issues.

Members were advised they would be contacted with answers to issues raised above that could not be addressed in the meeting.

The Panel thanked David O'Connor and Judith Hetherington Smith for the presentation and for attending the meeting.

- DECISION:
- (a) That in principal, the joint Panel support the proposal, as it would attract businesses to the area; and
 - (b) That when the Cabinet considered the proposals, that it also consider the following points raised by the joint Panel:
 - (i) That Value for Money must be achieved, and a paper on the funding of the project considered;
 - (ii) That the funding for the project should be found by the District in the most efficient way possible; and

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- (iii) That when entering into any agreement, members should be clear that although the target was for 90% of premises to have super fast broadband, it should be established that this service must be available to the actual premises themselves rather than just to the cabinet.

(Meeting ended at 7.25 pm.)

(End of Minutes.)