

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUNITY COMMITTEE

29 NOVEMBER 2017

RURAL BROADBAND PROJECT UPDATE

REPORT OF FRANK WILSON

(Contact: Frank Wilson, Tel: (01993) 861291)

1. PURPOSE

To update the Committee on the Superfast Broadband project to date and outline the next phases and planned activities involved.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee notes the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. On the 4th October 2017 the Council appointed Gigaclear Plc to design, build and run a Superfast Broad Band (SFBB) network covering 4653 premises across the district.
- 3.2. BDUK's Assurance Board formally signed off all the procurement documentation on the 19th October 2017 along with the relevant state aid approval and their £1.6M grant.
- 3.3. The contract between the Council and Gigaclear Plc was formally signed on the 23rd October and marked the end of the procurement phase and the move into the delivery phase of the project.
- 3.4. Gigaclear started work on the ground during the week commencing 13th November in Tackley and South Leigh. They are on schedule to have the first premises in these areas live before the end of the year.
- 3.5. In order to reflect the change to the delivery phase, the governance arrangements and frequency of meetings were reviewed and the following structure implemented:

Meeting	Frequency	Attendees
Operational	Weekly	Project Director / Delivery Managers (Gigaclear), Project Managers (WODC) & OCC Highways
Project Team	Monthly	Project Director (Gigaclear), Contracts Manager (Gigaclear), Project Managers (WODC) & Project Director (BDUK)
Project Board	Quarterly	Business Development Director (Gigaclear), Strategic Director (WODC), Cabinet Member (WODC), FMOS working party lead (WODC) & Project Director (BDUK)

- 3.6. The weekly operational meetings are done via a teleconference and focus on ensuring that any issue arising from the actual laying of the cables etc are dealt with in a timely manner to minimise delays, whereas the Project Team and Board meeting will look at the overall project timelines, any operational issues escalated, budget / payments and communications activities.

- 3.7. Whilst Gigaclear are still working through the detailed design stage of the next phases of the roll out, Appendix I shows the initial build schedule broken down per quarter. Once the detailed design work has been completed then more accurate dates will become available. Gigaclear has an effective 'Postcode Checker' on their website which residents can use to see if they will be covered.
- 3.8. It is important to note that the infrastructure Gigaclear is building is a network and the design of this dictates the order in which communities will be connected. It is not possible for communities to lobby to be moved up the rollout schedule and they should not be encouraged to do so.
- 3.9. A communication and marketing plan has been agreed with Gigaclear. Parish Councils will receive a co-branded pack. Residents will be kept well informed with an introductory flyer which includes an overview of the project and pre-dig letters to each house explaining the works about to take place. Both of these will be 'co-branded' with the Council for premises that we are funding. Our branding will not appear for any additional premises being commercially covered by Gigaclear.
- 3.10. Officers will monitor the build and will take photos for use on social media. Once the first village goes live there will be another press opportunity.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The value of the contract is £3,100,000, which is made up of £1,600,000 from BDUK and £1,500,000 from the Council.
- 4.2. Payments will be made against 4 milestones using the prescribed BDUK model, whereby the number of premises being covered during each milestone are agreed prior to work beginning and then this is assessed against evidence provided by the contractor before any payments are made.
- 4.3. The payment schedule is designed so that the BDUK funding is used first before the Council's capital is draw down. The table below illustrates the schedule:

Milestones	Amount	Timeframe	Funding Source
1	£103,333	Q1 2018/19	BDUK
2	£930,000	Q3 2018/19	BDUK
3	£930,000	Q1 2019/20	BDUK / WODC
4	£1,136,667	Q3 2019/20	WODC

5. RISKS/IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

The key risks associated with the next phase of the project are:

- Delays to the roll out schedule
- Premises currently identified as 'Under Review' during the OMR (Open Market Review) stage of the project are not delivered by the relevant companies
- Poor communication with residents

The project team will look to mitigate these by closely working with the contracted organisation and other parties over the coming months to ensure that the Council's aim is delivered.

6. REASONS

To be recognised as a leading council that provides efficient, value for money services.

Frank Wilson

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Background Papers:

None