

Chichester District Council

Cabinet

3 December 2019

Extending Ultrafast Public Connectivity

1. Contacts

Report Author:

Joe Mildred – Divisional Manager Business Support
Telephone: 01243 53728 E-mail: jmildred@chichester.gov.uk

Cabinet Member:

Peter Wilding - Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Telephone: 01428 707324 E-mail: pwilding@chichester.gov.uk

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet resolves to enter into an agreement with Cityfibre for an extension of the Council's full fibre connectivity using the West Sussex County Council's framework using the seven year revenue model.
- 2.2 That the Cabinet delegates authority to the Director of Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services the final approval of sites and contract detail.
- 2.3 That Cabinet recommends to Council to underwrite the cost of the contract and that any costs not met by the Business Rates Pool for 2019/20 up to a maximum of £743,000 over a seven year period starting no earlier than 2021.

3. Background

- 3.1 In order for us to take advantage of new technologies, get future-ready and not be left behind the Council needs infrastructure that can compete with other economies at home and internationally. We need reliability, speed, high capacity, high density and resilient networks that unlock new ways of living and working for residents, businesses, visitors and public services.
- 3.2 In September 2017, Cabinet agreed to join a countywide project, led by the County Council to roll out ultrafast broadband to some of the Council's buildings. In May 2018 West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) awarded a contract for gigabit capable dark fibre infrastructure. Network construction is completed in Chichester and Midhurst and nearing its end in the rest of West Sussex with an expected go live date of early 2020.
- 3.3 We have continued to work with WSSCC and the other West Sussex Districts and Boroughs to maximise the benefits of gigabit-capable full fibre across our areas and our operations.

3.4 In addition to this proposal to increase connectivity to the Council's assets within Chichester, the Council is also working on a rural project with WSCC and Horsham DC to deliver a new spine providing backhaul which will enable the ability to roll out better connectivity in the surrounding rural areas. A separate report will come back on this project at a later date.

4. Outcomes to be Achieved

4.1 Extending the number of public sector assets connected to a dark fibre network will enable ultra-fast connectivity to support the transformation of services delivered within the city, whether they be through the delivery of traditional council services or innovative new services to the public such as public Wi-Fi.

4.2 Increasing the amount of gigabit capable fibre within the city will enable it to be future-ready, ensuring that it is not left behind. Signalling our commitment to full fibre as an ambition for Chichester and the wider county also increases the likelihood of accelerating the investment from commercial organisations to lead to a roll out of fibre to the premise. This would enable homes and businesses to realise the benefits of ultra-fast connectivity.

5. Proposal

5.1 The original Gigabit contract with Cityfibre allowed for call offs under the existing procurement arrangement. The Everything Connects working group, which consists of all District and Borough Councils within West Sussex along with WSCC, has developed a joint approach to a further provision of dark fibre. Worthing and Adur have already agreed to roll out connectivity to additional assets and Horsham, Crawley and Arun councils are all currently in the process of seeking approval to do so. The proposal from Cityfibre covers Chichester, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and CDC will be working closely with Arun District Council to ensure the benefits are realised.

5.2 50 public sector assets within Chichester would be connected to the dark fibre network. The final site list is to be agreed from a long list and it is proposed that the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and the Director of Corporate Services are delegated the authority to agree the final list of assets to be connected.

5.3 The potential benefits of this project will be realised by those who use public services within Chichester, as well as residents, businesses and visitors to Chichester. This project does not extend beyond Chichester city, however surrounding areas are likely to benefit over time.

5.4 The proposed timescales are that design and build work would start in 2020, with the first sites being completed in late 2021 with completion expected in late 2022. The project will be managed by Cityfibre and the seven year payment period will not commence until 90% of the sites have been connected and handed over.

5.5 After seven years, the council will review its requirement for connected assets and renegotiate a contract with the option to extend including a minimum of a 10% reduction in ongoing costs included in the contract.

6. Alternatives Considered

- 6.1** An alternative commercial model option was offered by City Fibre which set a term of 30 years and required an upfront investment of £1.35m with minimal on-going monthly payments giving a total cost of £1.5m. The seven year model is preferred as it enables us to review the requirement of connected assets in light of the inevitable developments in digital infrastructure in around ten years' time.
- 6.2** Independently of this public sector network build, it is hoped that suppliers would invest commercially in Fibre to the premise in Chichester as the market develops further. It is our expectation that suppliers will view Chichester as a forward thinking city with a digital agenda and one that would welcome accelerated commercial roll out of full fibre. If this is the case, the project would seek to minimise disruption and align civil engineering works if there is an opportunity to do so.
- 6.3** In any event, Government has made the commitment that national gigabit coverage will take place by 2033. However, there is no guarantee on timescales and there is a risk that Chichester and the Council would miss out on opportunities to improve and transform services in the medium term.

7. Resource and Legal Implications

- 7.1** The total cost of the project is £743,000 and the council is asked to underwrite this cost. The countywide business rate retention pilot pool for 2019/20 focusses on digital infrastructure and this project is included on the list of potential projects for the pooled fund to support. Although as yet we do not have approval to fund this project from the pool funding is likely to be confirmed in early 2020. Any contribution agreed from the 2019/20 business rates pool will lessen the overall costs for the Council.
- 7.2** Future projects to maximise the benefit of the improved connectivity will come back to Cabinet and Council with individual business cases as the opportunities develop.
- 7.3** Some support is likely to be provided by the WSCC Digital Infrastructure Team. At this stage no additional staffing resources are requested however some project management resource for CDC may be required once the project is underway.

8. Consultation

- 8.1** This project was taken to Council on 22 January this year as an Initial Project Proposal Document with the title 'Expanding the Gigabit project to achieve a 'lit up' city'.
- 8.2** Close working with the other councils within the county is ongoing through the Everything Connects working group as well as the County Chief Executives and Leaders groups who oversee the governance of the Business Rates Retention Pool pilot.

9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1 The key risk arising from this project is supplier design and build delays, however Chichester and the other D&B's should benefit from Adur & Worthing experiences and with close monitoring and lessons learnt from CityFibre this should be minimal.

10. Other Implications

Are there any implications for the following?		
If you tick "Yes", list your impact assessment as a background paper in paragraph 13 and explain any major risks in paragraph 9		
	Yes	No
Crime and Disorder		
Climate Change and Biodiversity Improved digital connectivity has the potential to aid the reduction of carbon through the use of technology to avoid travel.	X	
Human Rights and Equality Impact		X
Safeguarding and Early Help		X
General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)		X
Health and Wellbeing		X
Other (please specify)		

11. Appendices

None

12. Background Papers

Gigabit West Sussex Districts and Boroughs - 5 September 2017

Initial Project Proposals 2019- 2020 – Council 22 January 2019