

Superfast Broadband (SBB) Progress Meeting 1 October 2015

Present: Chris Whitehead (District Councillor, Hambleden Valley Ward)
Paul Mains (Woodend resident)
Steve Proffitt (Pheasants Hill resident)
Chris Rawson (Bucks Business First, project manager)
Jacqueline Ford (WDC, Corporate Policy Team Leader)

Discussed:

1. Budget contribution from Wycombe District Council (WDC) confirmed at £921,600 (£460,800 central Government provision matched by WDC). The Local Enterprise Partnership have also allocated funding focussed on 19 business areas in Wycombe district and some of these could have positive impact for residents too. These funds are **in addition** to what BT would be spending in the area in their normal course of business – to ensure we all have at least 2mps, though there is every expectation that the minimum speed to be delivered nationally by BT will be raised by central government from 2 to 5-10 mps within the near future.

WDC are aware of BT's 'normal' investment plans through to 2017.

2. Lane End cabinet 5 (Frieth) and Henley cabinet 23 (Mill End) are now live; Henley cabinet 22 (Greenlands) and Turville Heath cabinet 2 (Ibstone) will be live by December as part of the current rollout. Premises within 1.5k of these cabinets will benefit – though the distance is not measured as the crow flies but as the cable runs, which is mostly under the roads. This covers Frieth, Ibstone, Mill End and most of Fawley. The costs associated with the connection of these cabinets are not part of the £921.6k.
3. Henley cabinet 33 (Mill End carpark) will not be enabled as its 'radius' overlaps with cabinet 23, and therefore relatively few premises would benefit – not cost effective. At least one new cabinet may have to be installed in more central locations (? Rockwell End, Turville) to ensure the maximum number of premises will benefit.
4. BT was presented with the ITT in September (and not July as had originally been scheduled). They will deliver their proposals in mid-December. This will consist of a postcode-by-postcode analysis, the timetable involved, the percentage coverage to be achieved and the technologies and costs involved. WDC and Chris Rawson (Bucks Business First) will review BT's proposals during Q1 2016, so the timetable for roll out will probably not be decided until March of that year.

BT have already disclosed their three year forward plan covering their 'commercial expenditure' to improve services within the area, i.e. from their 'normal capital expenditure envelope'. However, recent announcements and commitments to do more to support rural communities may change these plans.

5. All our postcodes are in the WDC 'preference list'. We identified four distinct areas that may each require a different solution:
 - a) Turville Heath, Northend, Southend: currently covered by Turville Heath cabinet 3, which, despite its name, is located in Southend. Too few premises, and too scattered to make upgrading the cabinet worthwhile, so a different solution is needed.

- b) Turville, Skirmett, Fingest: currently connected directly to Turville Heath exchange, not via a cabinet, so, again, a different solution is needed.
 - c) Hambleden, Rockwell End, Pheasants' Hill: currently covered by redundant cabinet 33 (see above)
 - d) Woodend/Bockmer End: covered by Henley, Marlow or Lane End cabinets, but too far away to receive SBB.
6. There are various technologies being considered:
- a) Reengineering the network – e.g. new cabinets (see above), so pushing fibre closer to the end users, thereby removing the copper distance and maximising speeds. The cost of installing a new cabinet is circa £21k, though the costs of installing the associated rewiring infrastructure will be a lot more as the more challenging locations are targeted.
 - b) Remote nodes serving 15 - 20 premises for small remote hamlets - using small cabinets that can be attached to telegraph poles, thus shortening the run of copper cable between homes and the remote node to improve speeds.
 - c) Onesie Cabinet - a relatively new concept that combines the main high-speed link (e.g. a fibre optic connection) with the existing infrastructure. This effectively means that a single street-side cabinet is used, housing fibre and copper equipment in one. The high-speed cable terminates at a hub near the customers' location, and the existing copper wire infrastructure is then used to carry the high-speed connection for the short remaining distance to the customers' premises. Most importantly, this has implications for Exchange Only lines, as it has been practically used to reengineer such lines to cabinets, enabling more access to fibre-to-the-cabinet based services.
- Both b) and c) above have been employed elsewhere in the country; we expect b) to become more commonplace moving forward.
7. The position of Village Networks in any proposals is uncertain. Currently they cannot access the current government funding due to EU conditions, particularly linked to wholesale network access. They are currently seeking to be a Government approved supplier of SBB in order to enhance their service proposition and be more competitive against other superfast broadband suppliers. VN are currently liaising both with Government and Bucks Business First in order to obtain this approval.
8. Work should be completed, or at least committed, by December 2017.
9. Chris Rawson will update me on progress (even if there hasn't been any!) by weekly email. He will also ensure I am copied in on all correspondence with constituents in the Hambleden Valley Ward.
10. We will meet again at 10.00 on December 22.