

TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
26 JANUARY 2012

BERKSHIRE SUPERFAST BROADBAND PROJECT
Assistant Chief Executive

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its last meeting, the Commission received a presentation on the work of the Bracknell Forest Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP). The presentation included information about the Superfast Berkshire Broadband project. Members raised two issues in particular, which were subsequently discussed by the Assistant Chief Executive and the Chairman of the Commission.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 2.1 The Government wants 90% of homes and businesses in the country to have access to superfast broadband and everybody to have access to at least 2Mbps, by 2015. The Government has allocated £530m to local authorities in England to provide superfast broadband in their areas.

Funding

- 2.2 Commission Members queried whether the amount of money allocated to Berkshire would be sufficient to support the roll out of superfast broadband.
- 2.3 The Government has allocated £1.43m to Berkshire. Market forces will provide superfast broadband to the majority of Berkshire's premises. However, some 8% of Berkshire's premises will be left out. Therefore, the Government's funding is intended to bridge the gap, working with money from the Berkshire local authorities (and the telecoms industry). The Government estimates that its allocation represents 50% of the cost. In reality the true cost will depend on the outcome of the procurement process to secure these works.

Speeds

- 2.4 The Government has defined "superfast" broadband as at least 24Mbit/sec. The upgrades planned will have the potential to carry broadband at speeds of up to 100Mbit/sec. To put this in context, the UK is currently rated 25th globally, with average speeds of 5.0Mbits/sec, the Netherlands rank 4th at 8.5, the fastest average speeds in Europe, and South Korea are top with 13.8. The USA averages 5.8 Mbits/sec. Thus the Government's planned increase to at least 24Mbits/sec would be a significant improvement.

Contact for further information

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