

Superfast Broadband for Rural Dorset -The Policy and Resources Committee on Wednesday 7 December considered a commitment to commit the Council to the project, agreeing in principle match funding to lever in the investment from the private sector and central government so that a credible Local Broadband Plan can be submitted to Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) by the end of December 2011.

There is considerable urgency in getting the plan submitted and approved. Any delay at this stage will have consequences for implementation, meaning the benefits of Superfast Broadband would not be available to businesses and communities until later.

The vision of the project is to provide improved access to Superfast Broadband for all businesses and citizens of the county. The first priority is to improve broadband connectivity and speeds for businesses, particularly those in rural areas. Ultimately the project seeks to achieve 100% Superfast Broadband coverage at speeds in excess of 30Mbps for all premises in Dorset. In line with the Digital Agenda for Europe, where by 2020, 100% of all premises will have at least 30Mbps connectivity and 50% of premises will have connectivity of 100Mbps.

Local Development Framework the next step - January 2011 saw the conclusion of an extended period of voluntary public consultation on the early options for the future of the district until 2027. Consulting with the public at this stage fits in with the Localism Agenda and was well received by local communities. We had over 3,000 submissions and this level of public interest shows that the District Council's decision to carry out this additional period of consultation was the right thing to do. The community had been given a real chance to shape the future of our district.

The Core Strategy is a key part of the Local Development Framework (LDF), which is the new Local Plan. We are obliged to prepare an LDF for the period until 2027 and not to do so would make the district vulnerable to development by appeal. Having a Local Plan is essential as it enables local communities to have control over future development in their areas and was confirmed as a requirement by the government in July 2010.

We are now ready for the next stage of Statutory Public Consultation, which will commence in March 2012 for a period of 12 weeks. There will be a Special Policy and Resources Committee meeting to deal with this single item. This meeting will take place on Wednesday 1 February, 2012 at the Barrington Theatre in Ferndown, starting at 6pm. This will be a meeting of the Committee in public, not a public meeting. However, members of the public will be given an opportunity to address the Committee regarding the content of the consultation document. Full details of the arrangements will be published in good time ahead of the meeting.

The LDF has been prepared jointly with Christchurch Borough Council, because many aspects of the local plan [Core Strategy] are common to both Councils. CBC will also be considering their consultation document ahead of an Extraordinary Joint Council meeting which is planned to take place on Monday 5 March at the Village Hotel Bournemouth, commencing at 6pm. Here, EDDC's Full Council will consider the recommendation forwarded by its Policy and Resources Committee.

Members will be asked to approve the documentation as being sound and suitable for Statutory Public Consultation. They will not be voting on the individual merits of the proposals contained in the document. This will come at later date prior to submission to the Planning Inspectorate for consideration, which is scheduled to be in December 2012.

Boyd Mortimer.20/12/11