



## Public announcement in July or August

We are now very close to completing our broadband investment contract. We are in the final stages of negotiation and expect things to wrap up for the end of July. We know how frustrating the wait has been for our broadband champions, but the end is in sight.

### 90% of premises

The Council is confident that we will meet our programme objectives that at least 90% of premises (homes and businesses) will have 24Mbps (Superfast Broadband speeds) or more and at least 2Mbps (Basic Broadband) will be available to everybody else. This £13.86 Million investment translates to an additional 65,000+ premises across the county receiving superfast broadband that otherwise would not.

### Starting January 2014

We are very conscious that securing this contract has taken a long time when broadband availability has become an ever more important demand for all communities. However, the negotiation for a contract of this size and complexity has to be thorough and the time taken by us in competitive dialogue is in line with the other authorities who have undertaken the same exercise. In addition, the progress of the County Council's procurement and final contract is subject to the close scrutiny and approval by the national program, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) but we anticipate that this will be completed at the end of July so as not to delay the contract announcement. Whilst we have not been able to maintain the original timeline for our contract negotiations, we are confident that this will have no impact on the delivery timescale. We expect delivery will be carried out in defined phases i.e. geographical areas of the county, over a 2 year period commencing January 2014 although considerable ground survey work will be underway in advance of that in 2013.

### Two national initiatives

As many of you are aware, there are two national broadband initiatives running

currently. The first of these is operated by BDUK which provides funding for county led broadband initiatives. There is a second national initiative run by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to support rural broadband investment.

The two broadband investment funds (ours through Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) and the Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF) at DEFRA) have been designed to run consecutively and separately. This requires that decisions on the BDUK investment have to be completed first. Only at that point will DEFRA determine the community bids to the Rural Community Broadband fund. Throughout our contract negotiation we have sought guidance and advice from BDUK and DEFRA to support our progress. The directions given to local authorities, have meant delays in decisions for DEFRA community bids (pending the outcome of our contract), as well as delays in confirming eligibility for those communities who may wish to pursue an application. These delays we believe are temporary and should be resolved once we have a final contract and confirmed broadband coverage for our funding from the supplier. The difficulty in coordinating these two investment schemes is a national issue.

The bottom line is that we will be in a position for public announcements in late July or early August latest and we are confident that we will achieve our objectives on county-wide coverage.

## **Announcements on the our preferred bidder**



We know that there has been speculation about a preferred bidder. At this point in the process, the preferred bidder is not yet officially selected “ this happens as part of the final stages of the procurement process. Therefore, we are not in a position to disclose the details surrounding the preferred bidder until the contract announcement (expected for the end of July).

## **Council Advises to Hold Back on Alternative Community Broadband Ventures**

We understand how frustrating it has been for all communities waiting for the final contract announcement and the details on broadband coverage. Some communities have been testing the waters on their own community investment projects. However, because the



Council is close to a final contract and announcement, we would recommend a wait and see approach before a community invests time and resource developing a new project.

The Intervention Area the Council is contracting for will provide coverage and broadband speeds that most communities are looking for. We expect that coverage will reach more than 90% of premises county-wide and the coverage maps available from the beginning of August will provide communities with a much clearer view of the gaps that remain and at that point we will also have sequence and timeline for the county-driven roll-out.

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More details are [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/broadband](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/broadband)

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