

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

REGENERATION CABINET MEMBER
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NORTHERN LINCOLNSHIRE BROADBAND – PROGRESS FROM CHECKPOINT B2 AND NEXT STEPS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1. To update Cabinet on the latest progress with the Northern Lincolnshire Broadband Programme.
- 1.2. To report on the successful passage of BDUK Assurance Checkpoint B2 and next steps.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1. The Northern Lincolnshire Broadband project underwent a major audit on 18 February 2013, 'Assurance Checkpoint B2'. Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) are a government team established to oversee all projects and audit projects via a series of Assurance Checkpoints.
- 2.2. BDUK Assurance Checkpoint B2 assessed the project's readiness to procure. This is a major audit of the project. It assesses 13 requirements that a project must have in place to move forward. These are set out below.
 - Invitation to Tender and Call Off Contract
 - State Aid requirements have been met including public consultation
 - Supplier engagement has been completed
 - Project governance has been established
 - Gateways and reporting has been established (internal audit)
 - A value for money strategy is in place
 - Cross border issues have been addressed
 - Demand registration and stimulation has been established
 - An appropriate range of skills and capacity are available
 - Key delivery risks are identified and are being managed
 - Arrangements for working with BDUK are in place
 - Treatment of non-BDUK funding sources have been established
 - Stakeholder engagement is managed.

- 2.3. BDUK Checkpoint B2 comprised a desktop review with a government auditor. It also included a further review by government legal, procurement and finance specialists.
- 2.4. The Northern Lincolnshire Broadband project received confirmation from BDUK on 25 February 2013 that it had successfully passed this checkpoint at the first attempt. Not all projects have passed this.
- 2.5. This meant that the project could issue its final Invitation to Tender (ITT). This was published via the council's procurement portal 'YorTender' on 1 March 2013. Thereafter, suppliers then have 10 weeks to raise any clarification questions and submit their tender response.
- 2.6. The procurement process will conclude with contract award in June 2013.
- 2.7. European funding – In addition to the procurement progress, government is currently assessing a £5.9m European funding application (ERDF) and all outstanding issues relating to it have been resolved. A decision on this application is expected in March 2013, with a contract signature in May 2013.
- 2.8. Business Support – This European funding will help fund the infrastructure project, as well as resource a business support programme. This support programme for eligible Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will be delivered internally. It will see over 330 businesses receive 12 hours of free support to maximise the opportunities afforded by superfast broadband. The first event for this is scheduled to take place on 23 May 2013. The Leader of the Council will open the event.
- 2.9. Communications – Press coverage for the project is ongoing. An article in the next edition of the Business Telegraph has been arranged. This will promote the support available for SMEs and the launch event planned in May. A press release for the passage of B2 and launch of the ITT has also been arranged.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1. To note the progress made with the Northern Lincolnshire Broadband Programme.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1. All project workstreams are on track. No BDUK or ERDF milestone has been missed to date. The ERDF application was submitted early. In many cases, lobbying efforts have been made by the project in attempt to make central government proceed more quickly.

- 4.2. Next steps – the business support programme is currently in development and posts recruited for its delivery. The project will be delivered internally, and coordinated by the Broadband Team.
- 4.3. Other local authorities have noted the progress made with the Northern Lincolnshire project. Due to the complexities contained with the BDUK process, several other local authorities including Derbyshire and Newcastle have sought advice and guidance from the project on assurance, tender documentation and European funding.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1. The project is currently proceeding within budget.
- 5.2. The business support programme will be resourced from within European funds.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1. Officers have completed an integrated impact assessment for the project
No issues of concern were highlighted.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1. Officers have consulted with Human Resources, IT And Finance on specific matters relating to the project. The outcomes of these consultations has helped shape our approach to project delivery.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. That the progress on taking forward the Northern Lincolnshire Broadband project is noted.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None

