

Report to: Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee

Date: 08 March 2022

Subject: **Broadband Contract Three - Update**

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Is this a key decision?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information or appendices?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state paragraph number of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, Part 1:	3
Are there implications for equality and diversity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide members of the committee with an update on delivery of Superfast West Yorkshire and York Broadband, Contract Three.

2 Information

Background

- 2.1 An update was provided to the Place, Regeneration and Housing Committee on 25 November 2021 on the progress of Superfast West Yorkshire and York Broadband Contracts Two and Three. As noted in the report, Contract Two with Openreach has now completed and has commenced its formal closedown through the Broadband UK (BDUK) external assurance process. Contract Three with Quickline Communications is currently scheduled to complete deployment of infrastructure in June 2022. This report provides a further update on the progress achieved by the end of December 2021.
- 2.2 The Broadband Contract Three programme is contractually expected to deliver access to superfast services to 1,565 businesses in specified rural areas of West Yorkshire and York. Access to 5,571 homes is also to be achieved in parallel. By 31 December, Quickline had delivered access to 480 businesses

and 1,809 premises in total. A further update on progress can be found in **Exempt Appendix 1**.

- 2.3 The technical solution initially deployed by Quickline is Fixed Wireless Access (FWA). It uses a wireless base station which is mounted on masts or buildings near the premises, instead of using copper or optical fibre to connect premises. The connection performance is designed to be more stable and predictable because the equipment is in a fixed location. Using FWA means that the structure deployed will have a greater reach and by default a greater catchment area.
- 2.4 Change Request CR001 to the contract has now been signed by Quickline and the Combined Authority. This change allows Quickline to utilise 5G frequencies as well as FWA to deliver the infrastructure solution. Use of this technology enables them to cover more premises at a further range from fewer masts, as well as increasing speeds to those premises served. This revised solution enables a range of technologies to be used which will prolong the longevity of the network build investment and serves to future proof the infrastructure with Gigabit capability.

3 Tackling the Climate Emergency Implications

- 3.1 The provision of superfast broadband access has the potential to reduce travel-to-work patterns into urban centres and other employment locations and reduce pressures in morning peak time commuting due to increased opportunities for home and/or flexible working. This will in turn reduce regional carbon emissions by reducing the need to travel to work.

4 Inclusive Growth Implications

- 4.1 9% of the premises targeted by the Broadband Contract Three programme are in socially deprived areas. The programme supports digital inclusion through enhanced access to superfast broadband, in particular access to increasingly digitised public services by residents in deprived and/or digitally excluded communities.
- 4.2 As part of the tendering process for the contract, Quickline committed to a range of social value obligations focussed on training and employment opportunities, which are being monitored.

5 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 5.1 The programme:
- (i) Supports enhanced digital inclusion through enhanced access to superfast broadband, in particular access to increasingly digitised public services by residents in deprived and/or digitally excluded communities.

- (ii) Addresses a lack of digital access in some of the hardest to reach urban, semi-urban and/or rural properties.
- (iii) Supports an increase in skilled people and better jobs, by allowing greater access to online courses and job searches.
- (iv) Digital infrastructure will contribute to wider and better access to further education (FE) and training including flexible and off-site learning opportunities.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 £6.898 million has been awarded by the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to the Combined Authority for the delivery of the Broadband Contract Three programme and the specified outputs (1,565 business premises).

6.2 The total cost of the programme is £9.110 million, comprising:

- (i) DEFRA capital - £6.898 million
- (ii) Quickline capital contribution - £1.464 million
- (iii) Combined Authority Revenue £0.748 million (Broadband Enabling Technology (BET) – A refund from an earlier infill satellite technologies programme' of £0.472 million, Business Rate Pool £0.2 million, Local Authority contribution if required up to £0.076 million)

6.3 A further update on progress can be found in **Exempt Appendix 1**.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The information contained in **Appendix 1** is exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 to Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the content of the appendices as exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information as publication could prejudice current and future decision making.

7.2 The Combined Authority has entered into a grant funding agreement with DEFRA for £6.898 million for the delivery of the Broadband Contract Three programme and the specified outputs (1,565 business premises). The Combined Authority has subsequently entered into a contract with Quickline for the delivery of the specified outputs within a given timeframe.

7.3 A further update can be found in **Exempt Appendix 1**.

8 Staffing Implications

8.1 There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

9 External Consultees

- 9.1 A partnership programme board is in place to oversee the operational elements of the Broadband Contract Three programme and is kept regularly updated on progress. The Programme Board is comprised of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority as Accountable Body and local partner council officer representatives from the five West Yorkshire authorities and York, together with Building Digital UK (BDUK) as the national delivery body.
- 9.2 Regular meetings are held with DEFRA as external funding body for the programme.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 The Committee notes progress to date on the Broadband Contract Three Programme as highlighted in section 2 above and the further update in **Exempt Appendix 1**.

11 Background Documents

- 11.1 None.

12 Appendices

- 12.1 **Exempt Appendix 1** – Broadband Contract Three progress update