



Agenda item:

Decision maker: Cabinet Member for Resources

Subject: Update on Super Connected Cities Programme

Date of decision: 16th July 2015

Report by: Director of Finance and Information services

Wards affected: ALL

Key decision: No

Budget & policy framework decision: No

1. Introduction

1.1 The Super Connected Cities initiative is a Government sponsored scheme by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to transform broadband access across the UK enabling everyone access to high-speed broadband. Approval was given for PCC to pursue three distinct strands as a part of the programme:

- WiFi to Public Buildings (My City WiFi)
- Vouchers
- Demonstrator Hub

This report focusses on the progress of the WiFi to Public Buildings strand (My City WiFi)

2. Purpose of report

2.1 To update the Cabinet Member on the Super Connected Cities Programme and the potential opportunities afforded by the new WiFi infrastructure deployed in the City.

3. Recommendations

3.1 The content of this report be noted.

3.2 To approve the completion of the WiFi to Public Buildings stage of the project and noting the installation of access points at 79 sites versus the original agreement of 49 sites

3.3 To investigate the potential opportunities afforded by My City WiFi for sensory applications with the express objective of providing efficiency savings for the Council and its public sector partners.

4. Background

4.1 There were three main goals for the Super Connected City programme:

- To support economic growth innovation and enterprise in Portsmouth
- To enhance the competitiveness of our city
- To aid digital inclusion.

The Super Connected City programme was seen as a key enabler to these three overarching goals, which are firmly rooted in local circumstance, culture, need and aspiration, are the building blocks of an achievable and sustainable city future and provide benefits that enhance quality of life for everyone.

5. Progress to Date

5.1 WiFi to public buildings

The main objective for the public building wifi project was to provide high-speed, high quality, secure, free wifi access in public buildings across the city to as many residents and visitors as possible.

During the programme the approach changed from upgrading 'Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC)', to 'Fibre to the Premise (FTTP)' largely as a consequence of state aid issues. The change in approach however, allowed more direct and measureable impact on business growth.

Initially the bid awarded was for £1,875,000 to provide WiFi to 49 public buildings including key public buildings with high footfall (such as the Portsmouth Ferry Port) and strategically placed buildings that would reduce the European Commission category of areas without 'Next Generation Access' to broadband (NGA white areas) in the city.

In December 2014 we took the opportunity and applied to the DCMS to increase the free public WiFi roll out to a further 62 public buildings focussing on those delivering adult social care. This was facilitated by reallocating £1,380,600 to the public wifi scheme from the initial allocation to the voucher scheme (see below). At the conclusion of the scheme it was only possible to rollout Public Access WiFi to a total of 79 sites, albeit in a very short timescale. Early feedback from various sites including Libraries and Community Centres is generally positive and we continue to monitor performance through the control system (CISCO Meraki Analytics) which enables us to produce a series of reports showing usage. This will enable us to tune the system to ensure the facility meets demand.

The DCMS agreement was to fund all installations that were successfully completed and operational by 31st March 2015, PCC requested approval to complete a further 14 sites by 30th June 2015 which was agreed. Therefore this stage is now considered closed as all sites are now operational with no further funding available from the DCMS.

The Council may wish to consider extending the My City WiFi network to other locations around the City when it considers its Capital Programme priorities in February 2016.

5.2 Vouchers

The second strand was to encourage local small and medium sized business to apply for a broadband connection voucher to increase the superfast broadband coverage across the city. Areas targeted were several business parks that are in 'NGA white areas' as well as sites throughout the city.

The Council was initially awarded £2,236,000 for the application of 500 vouchers. However due to low uptake nationally as well as in Portsmouth, DCMS agreed to reduce the voucher target to 160. In September 2014 the Council extended the scheme boundaries to include postcodes for Fareham BC, Gosport BC and Havant BC.

A significant part of the voucher scheme amounting to £1,380,600 of voucher funding was re-allocated to the public wifi project leaving an agreed final sum of £855,400 for the voucher scheme.

By 31 March 2015 when Phase 2 completed 69 Bespoke Vouchers and 132 pre-registered packages had been awarded versus the original target of 160. Phase 3 started on 1st April 2015 and to date a further 9 Bespoke Vouchers and 69 pre-registered packages have been issued.

A fourth strand of Concessions which sought to engage the market in areas of innovation to complement the work on the wireless network was withdrawn due to lack of market demand.

5.3 Demonstrator Hub

The Council was originally allocated £100,000 to create a Demonstrator Hub to provide help and advice on new technologies (e.g. VOIP and Cloud), connection speeds and drop in service for website health checks. We also provided information on the scheme and signposted to other business support agencies. The Demonstrator Hub was set up in partnership with the University of Portsmouth and achieved cost savings. Unfortunately, demand has been very low as SME's have access to the information from other sources.

5.4 An overall summary is set out below:

	Target	Forecast Achievement
Connection Vouchers	160	279
Public Building Wifi	89	79
Growth Hub	1	1
Wireless Concession	0	0

6. Conclusions

6.1 Impact of the programme

The City Council has significantly exceeded the targets set by DCMS verses the revised programme against a national backdrop of a challenging initiative.

The broadband connection voucher scheme will ultimately benefit a total of 279 SMEs/Charities within the authority boundaries of Portsmouth City Council and Fareham, Gosport and Havant Borough Councils. This should result in those businesses being able to grow and ultimately increase the economic growth of Portsmouth.

The wifi in public buildings project allowed the installation of superfast broadband in 79 sites across the City in partnership with Portsmouth University, allowing residents and visitors to Portsmouth to use My City WiFi, encouraging social inclusion and covering some areas that were previously NGA white areas.

6.2 Future Plans

The infrastructure that has been deployed as part of our wifi in Public Buildings will provide PCC with the opportunity to investigate the benefits of implementing a sensory network within the city. This concept is where sensors are fitted to specific objects (e.g. within buildings, parking sites, within vulnerable residents houses, etc.). This technology will enable the potential delivery of the following sensory applications:

- Patient monitoring & surveillance
- Building control & monitoring
- Smart parking / monitoring traffic congestion
- Smart lighting
- Waste detection
- Anti-pollution

Sensory networks are an important emerging technology that some areas of government already are deploying to bridge the widening gap between the demand to reduce costs and to improve services.

It is recommended that the City Council undertake an initial feasibility study into the opportunities afforded by sensory applications across both Council Services and in conjunction with our Public Sector partners.

7. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required as there are no proposed changes to services, policies, or procedures included in the recommendations.

8. Legal implications

8.1 The City Solicitor has formally considered this report for legal issues.

9. Director of Finance & Information Service's comments

9.1 The City Council was given a revised grant approval of up to £4.1m from the Department of Culture Media & Sport for this project, claimable retrospectively. The estimated final draw down on this funding is £2,801,000. This is analysed over the three project strands as follows:

<u>Project Strand</u>	Grant Approval £	Final Estimated Spend £
Connection Vouchers	855,400	160,000
WiFi in Public Buildings	3,255,600	2,635,000
Growth Hub	20,000	6,000
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	4,131,000	2,801,000

Whilst this project is now complete, DCMS are continuing with a further voucher scheme for small businesses which covers a wider area and includes additional local authorities. Although there is no authority specific grant allocation for this new phase, participants will be able to make a claim from the single resource held by DCMS for this purpose.

All expenditure made on the project is expected to be eligible and reclaimed from the Super Connected Cities grant.

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Signed by: Head of Financial Services

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by Cabinet Member for Resources on 16th July 2015

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Signed by: Cabinet Member for Resources