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Title of meeting: Resources Portfolio

Subject: Public Access Wifi and High Speed Broadband

Date of meeting: 21st January 2016

Report by: Director of Finance and Information Services

Wards affected: All

1 Requested by: Councillor Lee Mason

2 Purpose

To inform the Cabinet Member on the current status of High Speed Broadband and Public Access Wifi availability across the City and potential future direction.

3 Information Requested

3.1 Introduction

The Government sponsored Super Connected Cities initiative launched in 2013 was a scheme with the aim to enable everyone across the UK access to high-speed broadband. Following a successful bid process in partnership with Portsmouth University, PCC was authorised to both offer vouchers to pay the installation cost for SMEs to take advantage of High Speed Broadband and also to undertake an extensive rollout of Public Access Wifi (MyCityWifi) across the City.

The justification behind the PCC bid was to:

- Support economic growth innovation and enterprise in Portsmouth
- Enhance the competitiveness of our city
- Aid digital inclusion.

3.2 Background

WiFi to public buildings

By 30th June 2015, the date the scheme completed, PCC had implemented an infrastructure to support Public Access Wifi in 79 sites across the City. Recent analysis shows that this is being extensively used across these sites supporting

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those members of the public access to the internet via their Smartphones and Tablets, etc. allowing residents and visitors to Portsmouth to use My City WiFi.

Vouchers

The second strand of the scheme 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. By the conclusion of the scheme in September 2015 a total of 297 vouchers had been issued enabling those businesses to grow and ultimately increase the economic growth of Portsmouth.

Wireless Concession

A further strand was to investigate the opportunity to issue a concession to a mobile provider to complement the work on the wireless network and extend wifi coverage across the City however this scheme was withdrawn at the time due to lack of market maturity.

4 Current Status and Future Direction

4.1 Public Access Wifi

MyCityWifi

Worldwide although there are 10M commercial hotspots there are now 168M community hotspots with the emphasis of supporting social inclusion. The public expectation of the provision of public access wifi is increasing. Under the Super Connected Cities scheme PCC has provided access in public buildings but there are now opportunities to increase network coverage across the City.

Areas where this could be of benefit for example are:

- 1) Hotwalls Arches project – the project to transform the Hotwalls arches in Old Portsmouth will deliver basic accommodation infrastructure including broadband connectivity. We can utilise this connectivity to provide public access wifi. Not only will this support wifi for general day-to-day use by residents and visitors, it will also be available when the new large Aircraft Carriers are based in Portsmouth supporting those families that have come for the large send-off events across Old Portsmouth.
- 2) Extended coverage at the Continental Ferry Port - currently MyCityWifi is only available on the Ferry Port terminal but it could be extended to cover the Car Park for use of visitors when they are waiting to board the ferries, and to advertise the attractions of Portsmouth for new visitors arriving via the ferries.
- 3) The Director of Culture and City Development has asked for an investigation into extending wifi coverage across the Guildhall Square campus and along Southsea Seafront from Cumberland House to the D-Day Museum, again to enhance the experience of residents and visitors.

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Wireless Concession

Although this option was not pursued as part of the original Super Connected programme, the market has now moved on and it is now a suitable time to investigate this option again. As a consequence we are currently in the process of taking expert advice on both the commercial and technical challenges this presents. Mobile providers will see this as a potential opportunity to generate a revenue stream from advertising, so it is vitally important that the contract is set up such that emphasis is to benefit the City of Portsmouth.

It is noted that a number of other Cities have already pursued this option in a variety of different ways, some more successful than others. We will be contacting these Local Authorities to understand their experiences and any lessons learned.

4.2 The Internet of Things (IoT)

The current view is that the Internet of Things is a major area of growth and will have a transformative effect on society. A recent report by independent consultants estimates that the global value of the Internet of Things sector will exceed £255 billion a year by 2020.

It should be noted that the infrastructure to support public access wifi also provides the core infrastructure to support the growth of the Internet of Things. There is growing evidence of the usefulness of the 'Internet of Things' to improve services. Of note is that the City of Manchester has just been awarded a £10M government grant to demonstrate how IoT technologies will improve services in four key areas: healthcare; transport; energy / environment; and culture / community with the aim of demonstrating the concepts of a 'smart' city. The areas that Manchester is taking forward are listed in Appendix A.

In Portsmouth the University hosted a workshop in August 2015 bringing together various organisations and businesses (e.g. PCC, the LEP, local SMEs, etc.) that defined the issues facing the City and innovative ideas for addressing them.

5 High Speed Broadband

PCC has recently taken up discussions with VirginMedia as a part of their 'Project Lightning' initiative, where they have proposed to extend their national fibre network to approximately four million additional premises over the next five years supported by a budget of approximately £3 billion.

Although Virgin Media was one of the first companies to offer broadband services it has less coverage than BT throughout the country, but is now considered the market leader in the areas it does cover.

The motivation for VirginMedia is to provide high speed broadband via fibre connectivity to those areas within the City where there is little or no provision currently. However the emphasis for PCC will be to ensure this is delivered in line with the economic development projects tied to the 'Shaping the future of

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Portsmouth' strategy and to review the lack of provision in our Housing stock and other PCC premises. This new fibre connectivity around the City will support our 'smart city' initiatives e.g. future transport initiatives, etc.

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Signed by (Director)

Appendices: Appendix A - City of Manchester, CityVerve Project

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

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Appendix A

Manchester's CityVerve Project

The project is made up of a number of innovative elements, including:

- Management of chronic respiratory conditions - CityVerve will set up a 'biometric sensor network' which will help improve responses to patients' conditions and improve how local healthcare services work.
- Community wellness - a network of sensors positioned in parks, along commuter and school routes will track the progress of individuals and teams competing against each other for physical activity and fun. Examples include the "Great Space Race Challenge" for Manchester residents to walk to the moon.
- Talkative bus stops - CityVerve will convert 'flag and pole' bus stops into safe places with location-based services, sensors/beacons, mobile apps and intelligent digital signage. People will check-in to their bus stop and let bus operators know they are waiting for their service.
- Smart lighting - Manchester, like many cities, is seeing a growth of traffic and congestion. To reduce car use, alternative forms of transport need to be attractive and safe. Smart lighting, in addition to connected street lighting, will help address this.
- Bike sharing - The Manchester Corridor through-route will soon become bus and bike only. Bike sharing schemes can be expensive to install and maintain, and so an alternative is to use Internet of Things enabled bikes in a crowd-sourced and maintained, secure bike sharing service. It will also include 'e-cargo' bikes to make 'last-mile' deliveries on the Corridor.
- Smart air-quality monitoring - Street furniture and connectivity infrastructure such as lamp posts and street cabinets on the Manchester Corridor will be used to monitor air quality at different heights and locations. Information will be passed to those with health conditions and made generally available to support walking options and routes.