

<b>Item No.</b> 24.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 9 February 2016	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Broadband in Rotherhithe	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Fiona Colley, Finance, Modernisation and Performance	

## **FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR FIONA COLLEY, CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE, MODERNISATION AND PERFORMANCE**

This report provides Cabinet with an update on the work the council is doing to bring superfast broadband to the Rotherhithe peninsula.

Crucially a constructive working relationship has been established with BT Openreach, a major provider of broadband infrastructure, who is now offering a combination of solutions to improve broadband coverage in Rotherhithe.

BT has committed to the deployment of new green boxes, which bring fibre cables and improved connection speeds and will deliver superfast broadband to an additional 4,000 homes in Southwark, with a particular focus in Rotherhithe, by 31 March 2016.

BT and the council are also proposing to run a pilot in a number of council housing blocks in Rotherhithe where BT will install smaller, condensed versions of green boxes in the building. This is new technology and is known as Fibre to the Internal Cabinet (FTTIC). If successful we will look to expand this provision to more estates.

A Rotherhithe Broadband working party has been established which includes officers from the Planning and Highways departments as well as Housing & Modernisation. The group will manage liaison with BT Openreach (and potentially other broadband infrastructure providers) and push for speedy and complete deployment of fibre cabling in Rotherhithe and elsewhere in Southwark.

Overall good progress is being made in improving broadband services but we are still some distance from the 100% coverage that we are seeking and so our work continues.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Cabinet is asked to note the progress being made in bringing superfast broadband to the Rotherhithe area.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

2. Access to broadband services is notoriously poor in the Rotherhithe and Canada Water areas. For many, access to good internet connections is like any other utility service; like gas, water and electricity, and should be generally available. Access to the internet is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity for many citizens and businesses. They are increasingly reliant on the internet to connect with services, goods and other people.

3. For many people, access to good internet services is essential to their daily lives, enabling them to keep in contact with family and friends, access information about goods and services and do their shopping. Studies have shown that those with good internet access are typically wealthier, healthier and better educated.
4. Students need access to the internet to carry out research, do their homework and communicate with their peers and tutors. Courses are often delivered on-line and interactions with education providers are on-line. Without access to good internet services, study would be a significantly greater challenge.
5. The Government has embarked on a Digital by Default Service Standard which will necessitate citizens to conduct transactions on-line. Universal Credit has started to be rolled out in Southwark since the beginning of November 2015. There is the presumption that applications for Universal Credit will be made on-line. All transactions will be completed on-line and payments will be made directly into claimant's bank accounts. It is essential that claimants are able to access their Universal Credit accounts and bank account on-line in order to avoid errors and delays in managing their claim.
6. Disabled residents in particular benefit from services provided on-line. For those with mobility limitations, the internet opens up opportunities for options to access services which they may have otherwise been denied.
7. The access to good broadband in the Rotherhithe and Canada Water areas has become a significant local issue. Local residents and businesses have created a pressure group, the Rotherhithe Broadband Group and have been very effective in drawing the matter to the attention to local politicians and the council and lobbying internet service providers for improved services in the area. It is also considering developing its own fibre network based on models of similar groups elsewhere in the UK.
8. Southwark has made a promise to bring superfast broadband to the Rotherhithe Peninsula. The council has brokered a number of meetings with the Rotherhithe Broadband Group, BT, council officers and other stakeholders. Other council members have also been working on behalf of constituents to encourage those with influence to improve broadband access in the area.

### **Broadband in Rotherhithe**

9. Access to good broadband services in Rotherhithe and Canada Water is generally poor. Anecdotally, residents' access to anything other than very basic services is difficult. The Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) team within the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for the improvement of the UK's broadband infrastructure. Its objective is to: "achieve a transformation in our broadband access, with everyone in the UK able to access broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbit/s) and 95% of the UK receiving far greater speeds (at least 24 Mbit/s) by 2017.
10. In 2014 the council commissioned Atkins (engineering consultants) to review broadband access in Rotherhithe. The report confirmed the challenges in the area (see map at appendix 1). It also suggested some of the solutions. The report identified that poor access in traditional docks areas is not unusual. They have historically been poorly served and the expansion of broadband services has not kept up with the development of homes and businesses in these areas.

11. Premises in the Rotherhithe area, consisting of Rotherhithe and Surrey Docks wards are served from the Bermondsey exchange located on Lynton Road approximately 1.3 km away from Lower Road. The distance from the exchange exacerbates the problem as does the paucity of BT “green boxes” which bring fibre cables and improved broadband speeds closer to premises.
12. BT Openreach is the incumbent telecommunications infrastructure provider in the UK. They own the most pervasive network coverage throughout the country and serve all types of premises; residential and commercial. As a purely wholesale provider, BT Openreach does not offer services to end users but allow Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and suppliers to buy connectivity services to deliver their own services to end-users over this infrastructure.
13. Until recently the Government has been concentrating on improving broadband in rural areas. They have been subsidising the costs of improving services through BT Openreach and services in rural areas have been improved. As a result, some inner city and urban areas have been left behind in the rollout of Superfast Broadband.
14. Other service providers have failed to bridge the gap and tend to look at the anticipated commercial benefits before committing to infrastructure changes. BT Openreach is now more receptive to appeals for improving broadband services. It is also appears to be sensitive to recent criticism in the media about the lack of broadband services in some areas of the country.

### **Suggested solutions**

15. There are a number of broadband service providers that are able to deploy fibre cable and broadband services e.g. BT Openreach, Virgin, Hyperoptic, Community Fibre. Whilst BT Openreach is part of BT Group PLC, it only provides infrastructure and does not itself offer ISP services to end users. BT Openreach will allow ISPs and suppliers to buy connectivity services to deliver their own services to end-users over this infrastructure.
16. Council officers have been working with BT Openreach to encourage them to expand their broadband presence on the Rotherhithe Peninsula and elsewhere in Southwark. A constructive working relationship has now been established with BT officers. Over the summer discussions have been taking place, and BT is now offering a combination of solutions to improve broadband coverage in Rotherhithe and elsewhere in the borough.
  - a. The deployment of new green boxes is planned to deliver superfast broadband to an additional 4,000 homes in Southwark by 31 March 2016. This is known as Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) (see map at appendix 2).
  - b. Install smaller, condensed versions of green boxes in Southwark buildings. This is new technology and is known as Fibre to the Internal Cabinet (FTTIC). The proposal is to run a pilot in a few buildings to prove the technology and its applicability to Southwark buildings, with a view to further expansion should it prove to be a success.

## **Broadband in Rotherhithe Working Party**

17. A working party has been established to oversee the broadband improvements in the Rotherhithe area. The first meeting of the group took place on 9 September 2015. It includes officers from the Planning and Highways departments and Customer Experience.
18. The purpose of the group is to oversee broadband improvements, assist BT Openreach where possible to smooth the path to locating green cabinets and cabinets internal to Southwark buildings. The group will manage liaison with BT Openreach staff and push for speedy and complete deployment of fibre cabling in Rotherhithe and elsewhere in Southwark. BT Openreach officers will be invited to attend future meetings of the group to provide regular updates on the improvements being sought.
19. Southwark has been in liaison with BT Openreach about council owned buildings in the Rotherhithe area which might be appropriate for the deployment of FTTC. They have selected three buildings for survey which has been undertaken. A site visit has also taken place to help identify where the technology might be best placed in the buildings which works for both BT Openreach and the council.
20. Members of the working party met with representatives of the Rotherhithe Broadband Group on 16 October 2015, to provide an update on the work taking place with BT Openreach. They were pleased to see that progress was being made in improving broadband services but were also keen to see plans for achieving 100% coverage in the area. The council shares this ambition and will continue to push for ever greater coverage.

## **Digital Exclusion**

21. Being digitally capable can make a significant difference to individuals and organisations day to day. For individuals, this can mean cutting household bills, finding a job, or maintaining contact with distant friends and relatives. For businesses, going online can provide ways to reach more customers and reduce operating costs. The internet also provides broader benefits, by helping to address wider social and economic issues like reducing isolation and supporting economic growth.
22. A recent paper on digital exclusion in Southwark highlighted the difference between having access to the internet with the ability to use it. 98% of Southwark residents have access to the internet, 92% have home access to the internet, but only 83% of residents possess basic on-line skills.
23. This means there are approximately 40,000 people across the borough who do not have the basic on-line skills necessary to send and receive emails, use a search engine, browse the internet, and complete online forms. A significant proportion of the population therefore is likely to be lacking access or skills to make the most of that the digital world has to offer.
24. Work is already underway across Southwark in many different forms and partnerships to support and address these issues, for example through community engagement work with tenants and other groups, support in Libraries and through specialist programmes helping people back into work.

25. It is important to continue to bring together and evaluate qualitative and practical evidence from ongoing projects – both across the Council, partners and including the third sector to find out what works and how sustainable change can be achieved to ensure residents can make the most of on-line opportunities.

### **Risks**

26. The council does not provide internet services and is working with others to improve the situation in Rotherhithe. There are risks for the council in connection with service delivery and the expectations this might create. BT Openreach is not promising 100% Superfast broadband coverage in Rotherhithe or elsewhere in the borough. They are however committed to improving services and the council will continue to push for even greater improvements in the future.

### **Financial implications**

27. At present there are no costs to the council associated with this initiative.

### **Other options**

28. It is important to note that the work BT Openreach initiative does not preclude other infrastructure service providers from extending their broadband provision in Southwark. They do however tend to be exclusive offers, i.e. subscribers will be tied in to receiving their broadband from a single supplier. The council would however welcome any initiatives which would result in greater access to broadband services across the borough.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC15/034)**

29. The strategic director of finance and governance notes the contents of this report and acknowledges that at present this initiative holds no cost implications for the council.

### **Director of Law and Democracy**

30. The council has sought independent legal advice on the proposed structure of this project and in ensuring, to the extent possible, that the project complies with state aid and procurement requirements.
31. The council is currently examining the structure of the proposed arrangement in more detail and will report back to members in due course.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

<b>Background Papers</b>	<b>Held At</b>	<b>Contact</b>
None		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Rotherhithe Broadband and Availability Speed
Appendix 2	Deployment - Southwark Council Phase 1

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Fiona Colley, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director for Housing and Modernisation	
<b>Report Author</b>	Richard Selley, Head of Customer Experience	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	28 January 2016	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments sought</b>	<b>Comments included</b>
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	28 January 2016	

# APPENDIX 1

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## Rotherhithe Broadband Availability and Speed



Postcode map of the maximum broadband speed currently available in Rotherhithe

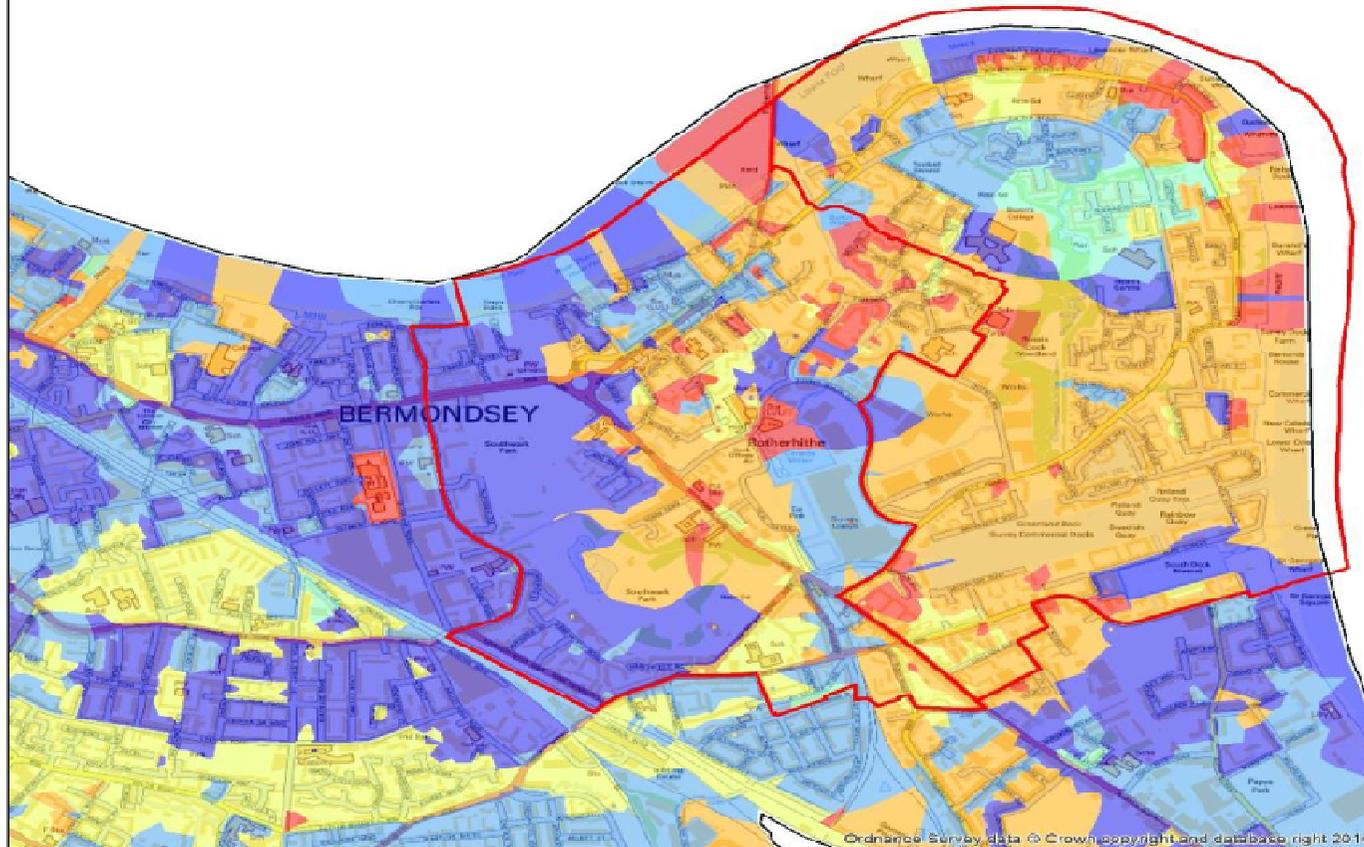
### Legend

Rotherhithe and Surrey Docks Ward Boundaries

### Maximum Broadband Speed

- 0 - 2 Mbit/s
- 2 - 8 Mbit/s
- 8 - 24 Mbit/s
- 24 - 55 Mbit/s
- 55 - 80 Mbit/s
- > 80 Mbit/s

0 0.1 0.2 0.4 Kilometers



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**ATKINS**  
Date: 22/10/2014

## Deployment ... Southwark Council Phase 1

Map 1: Blue area shows coverage before London Expansion Programme (LEP)  
Map 2: Pink areas show additional coverage after Phase 1 deployment of LEP

