Broadband Meeting Report on South Gloucestershire Extended Phase 2 Work

Date: 2017-06-12 **Location:** Council offices, Yate

Present

Community Representatives	Richard Williams, Andrew Watkins, Dan Orchard, Sid Crighton, Terry Barnaby
Council and Broadband Team	John Goddard, Dave Perry, Nita Patel, Rhianon Wakely
BT/Openreach	Edward Hunt, Richard Leeding, Ian Musgrove

Notes

This report is written primarily by the community representatives and so is mainly from their viewpoint. There are some council views included as well. Particular community representative views are in square brackets [] and council views in braces {}.

Overview

Background/Questions asked from the representatives

1. Since the announcement of the extended phase 2 broadband rollout and which villages would be covered, there has been no information from the council on which properties will have access to upgraded broadband internet despite numerous requests for information. The Council did say additional information would not be available until survey work was completed, which is normally just before the build starts in the relevant quarter.

2. There has been little new information on the technical aspect of this infrastructure and what service the residents will get. [There has been some information very recently, but some of that we believe to be misleading and some incorrect]. {The council did say this information would not be available until after the survey and planning work was completed as it is at this point the council determines technology, which then impacts on the exact premises to be covered in an area}.

3. At the meeting with parish council representatives in March 2016 it was stated that it would be helpful if the council could communicate at the start of the next phase which areas were likely to be covered, rather than waiting until survey work was completed. The Council has done this, but there has been little communication from the council since then confirming these plans and timescales are still on track.

4. The web site has basic information on it, some out of date. It could do with more information of the areas updated, being updated and are yet to be considered and also should reflect new approaches and technologies such as FTTP.

5. Why is the FTTC system being used in Tytherington village when FTTP was stated and publicised as the technology for all the extended phase 2 areas?

6. What are the options for those, in the areas covered, that do not get FTTP?

7. Residents have not been notified that surveying work is being done in their areas.

Meeting

1. A draft example of improved information was shared shortly ahead of the meeting which showed the postcodes to be covered for Tytherington and Oldbury Naite. It transpires that the council cannot definitively confirm which premises will be able to get the updated services until all the work is complete or indeed what technology will be used. {Once the survey work is completed and build decisions are taken, the council will be able to confirm whether the deployment to your area will be FTTC or FTTP.} The council states their preference is now FTTP unless the cost differential is too great where they will decide on FTTC. { This is to ensure as wide a coverage as possible across South Gloucestershire.} We have asked that information is shared with us, the town and parish councils and the rural people as soon as possible.

2. The council has also agreed following our meeting that they will look to share with us more detail earlier over which premises are likely to be covered, the nature of this will be different depending on whether it is FTTP or FTTC. We have also asked them to look at whether some kind of 'heat map' can be shared with areas ahead of survey work giving an indication of likely coverage. We recognise that this will be subject to survey, and could change when built out, but we still think this would be useful for the council to share. The Council has agreed to look at whether and to what degree this would be possible with Openreach. [We have stated many times that the businesses and residents in the rural areas need information to plan ahead. We also stated that due to rural properties sometimes being distant from others, this needs to be done to the property level not a postcode level. Unfortunately, we are left with the situation that no one will know definitively what upgrades they will get until the work is completed and it looks like the work will only be completed at the end of the quarter planned].

3. The broadband team have stated that the next phase 3 programme is at premise level, phase 2 extension is at postcode level, and will send us the potential postcodes that are part of the extended phase 2 work. The Broadband team are going to look to see if they can release postcode level information much earlier on (subject to final survey, planning and installation issues).

4. If the council is likely to see delays due to weather, easement difficulties etc. they have said they will let us know. We are hopeful that with the provision of earlier 'caveated' information and potential heatmaps, this will give a clearer idea of the exact area within and around a village to be covered, but recognise this cannot be confirmed until the survey work is completed, decisions on technology are taken, and ultimately the

build is completed.
[Whilst the council have published the village they will be covering through SEP, we feel we are still left with no visible, premises based, broadband infrastructure plan we can see for the extended phase 2 areas].

5. The broadband team recognised that there was a lack of updates/information on their website.

6. On the FTTC technology rather than the FTTP indicated for Tytherington it was stated that whilst the council now has a preference for FTTP, the technology decision is still subject to survey and business case. {This was done on achieving the most coverage for the funding available.} No information on the price difference was given.
[The costs are probably under NDA. Unfortunately, we the tax payer, are left with how Openreach decide to price things, which is not open to scrutiny other than by the council and BDUK (a government unit within DCMS) and how the council decide].

7. We believe the FTTC system will be obsolete within 5 - 10 years and we believe its overall cost over 15 years will be much higher for everyone and provide a substantially reduced level of service (reliability, speed, performance etc.) in rural areas. We are concerned that the rural areas infrastructure will again be an issue in the near future while urban areas are updated to better systems. Maybe another supplier, such as Virgin Media or Gigaclear could/would have updated this village to FTTP if Openreach would not at a reasonable price, but again this is not open to scrutiny.

8. {The national framework under which the council's current programme operates is based on achieving the most coverage for the available funding. The council recognises that FTTP is better future proofed than FTTC, however through taking an approach to date of FTTC we have been able to bring better broadband coverage (24mbps and above) to more premises across South Gloucestershire than had we chosen FTTP. We recognise that as technology evolves, the costs of broadband coverage via FTTP in some communities are falling, and this is becoming the preferred option. This would not have been possible at the start of the programme. The majority of phase 2 SEP is expected to be FTTP. We believe that through the deployment of FTTC in the earlier phases more premises have seen superfast uplift, and this approach has got fibre further out into communities. With any further potential investment from government the current FTTC solutions could be further uplifted to FTTP if required as part of any future phases. }

9. Openreach were asked about the options for properties that were in the rollout areas but would end up not receiving an upgrade.
[We understood that some properties would be hard/costly to upgrade which was why we wanted to know which properties might have a risk of this. We thus wanted to know what their options were, like can they pay excess construction charges to get the

service and is there a degree of subsidy/grant available if so.] Unfortunately, Openreach could not provide any real options apart from a Community Partnership scheme that is not useful form our experience although they did say it might be possible for an individual to use this in some way. The broadband team also did not have any answers. We discussed a range of options including the ECC route with own dig ducting, using FTTrN and wireless with Openreach and the broadband team, who agreed to take these away and look at what additional guidance could be given for those properties on the edge of areas to be covered.

10. Technology. The community representatives and broadband team still hold differing views in respect of technology and its deployment concerning FTTC and FTTP for the rural locations. It is pleasing to note that the broadband team are now looking more pro-actively to deliver FTTP, which whilst it may be more disruptive to households in the short term (requires new lines to be brought directly into the house), and is still slightly more expensive in respect of purchasing contracts with ISPs, and potentially with less choice of ISP, we believe it is the only real solution for rural areas. FTTP is far more reliable, provides guaranteed speeds no mater how distant you are and offers very fast downstream and upstream speeds now and even faster in the future as will be needed as the Internet develops. It will also likely become the defacto technology used in all including urban areas across the country within the next 7 to 15 years. We still do not know the planned split ratio which will define what level of overall speed/latency the service will provide or which areas will genuinely have FTTP provision and we have asked Openreach to confirm this.

11. The representatives, offered our help to the broadband team on providing technical help, ideas and a route for the community to communicate.

12. A draft example of an updated community hand out document was emailed to the representative a day before the meeting. We have commented on it and have offered help to improve this for resident's needs.

13. The broadband team said they would look to improve communications, including their website information, within the resources they have.

14. The community representatives said they would form a group to aid communications.

15. The broadband team will produce a map of coverage area for phase 3.
[We hope this includes all of the rural areas/properties that have not been upgraded as yet].

16. The council stated: {Funding does not allow for 100% coverage across South Gloucestershire, but as a result of the earlier phases over 20,000 premises now have access to superfast broadband services that did not before. It is recognised that there is still significant pressure from those most rural areas and villages yet to be covered. As part of the phase 3 programme we the council are looking to cover approaching 99%

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of South Gloucestershire, which may be one of the highest levels of coverage within England.}