

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE

22 March 2017

Date: For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Renewal & Recreation Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee on 7th March 2017

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Contact Officer: Kevin Munnelly, Head of Renewal
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Chief Officer: Executive Director of Environment & Community Services

Ward: Darwin;

1. Reason for report

A proposal has been received from the Cudham Village Residents' Association for Growth Fund funding towards the provision of upfront Broadband infrastructure.

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the Executive approve funding of £15k from the Growth Fund to support the community initiative detailed in paragraph 3.3 of this report and agree that the Executive Director of Environment and Community Services is delegated authority to release the final funding with the Agreement of the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation and the Director of Corporate Services.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: N/A
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. BBB Priority: Supporting Independence Regeneration:
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost: £15k
 2. Ongoing costs: Non-Recurring Cost: N/A
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Growth Fund
 4. Total current budget for this head: £4.645m
 5. Source of funding: Growth Fund
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 5
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-Statutory - Government Guidance:
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: The Broadband services will be provided by Pine Media directly to Downe Village Residents' Broadband Ltd, who act on behalf of both Downe and Cudham Village Residents' Associations.
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 600 households
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: The Portfolio Holders for Renewal & Recreation and Resources support the proposal.

3. COMMENTARY

Broadband Infrastructure Investment

- 3.1 Feedback from local business organisations has previously highlighted the fact that variable broadband coverage across the Borough is impacting negatively on business activity rates. This is particularly true of areas in the south of Borough and around Downe and Biggin Hill. The Department of Culture, Media & Sport has introduced a series of initiatives targeted at individual businesses to address these issues. However, take up these direct grants has been patchy, especially in peripheral locations, due to the lack of network infrastructure.
- 3.2 In May 2016 the Executive considered and approved a funding request from the Downe Village Residents' Association for funding of £49,702 towards the installation of three fibre enabling cabinets which would serve Downe Village, Chelsfield Old Village and part of Keaston –Leaves Green End area. The infrastructure is being provided by BT Openreach under direct contract to the Downe Village Broadband Ltd and would enable 545 properties and is due for full installation by July 2017.
- 3.3 As part of a joint initiative between the Downe and Cudham Village Residents' Associations a further funding request has been submitted to the Growth Fund for £15k to extend fast broadband services to up to 600 properties in Cudham Village. An agreement has been reached with a niche broadband provider, Pine Media, who will provide the service via a relay from the radio mast at Knockholt. The funding will be used to provide the upfront infrastructure costs and is seen as a very cost effective solution. It is proposed that a similar grant agreement is drafted between the Council and the Cudham Village Residents' Association.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

- 4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Plan report to Executive in February 2013 identified as a key policy objective the maximisation of economic growth. This included a commitment to identifying investment opportunities and undertaking key infrastructure improvements.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A sum of £15k is requested to be drawn down from the Growth Fund to contribute towards the costs of installing fast broadband services for Cudham Village via the Downe Residents' Broadband Ltd, in the form of a grant.
- 6.2 The Growth Fund currently has an unallocated balance of £4.645m, however should the Executive agree funding for the Bromley Public Realm scheme of £3.604m, the unallocated balance will reduce to £1.041m.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None for the purposes of this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 A formal grant agreement will need to be concluded. The Grant is below the de minimis threshold for State Aid.

9. PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Broadband services will be provided by Pine Media directly to Downe Village Residents' Broadband Ltd, who act on behalf of both Downe and Cudham Village Residents' Associations.

Non-Applicable Sections:	N/A
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	N/A