Report No. HPR2023/025	**London Borough of Bromley**	
	PART ONE - PUBLIC	

Decision Maker:	**RENEWAL, RECREATION AND HOUSING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**		
Date:	**Thursday 15 June 2023**		
Decision Type:	Non-Urgent	Non-Executive	Non-Key
Title:	**DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE WORK PLAN UPDATE**		
Contact Officer:	Ose Akpom, Economic Development Manager E-mail: ose.akpom@bromley.gov.uk		
Chief Officer:	Director of Housing, Planning, Property and Regeneration		
Ward:	All Wards		

---

1. Reason for decision/report and options

    1.1 The Digital Infrastructure Work Plan (DIWP) was adopted by the Council in February 2021 (Report No. DRR20/017 approved by the Executive on 10th February 2021). This report provides an update on progress of digital connectivity within the borough.

    1.2 A 'for information' update on the Digital Infrastructure Work Plan is provided to RR&H PDS quarterly.

_____

2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

    This information report is to provide an update only.

    That Members of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS:

    2.1 Review the content contained within the report, which sets out progress in relation to the delivery of the Digital Infrastructure Work Plan within the borough.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children
1. Summary of Impact: Improved digital infrastructure will create opportunities with regards to work, education and access to public services. This will be supported by ICT training for residents at the Council's libraries and resource shops.

Transformation Policy
1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority (delete as appropriate):
    (1) For children and young People to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
    (2) For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
    (3) For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
    (4) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
    (5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.

Financial
Cost of proposal: No Cost
2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
3. Budget head/performance centre: Culture and Regeneration – Economic Development
4. Total current budget for this head: £127k
5. Source of funding: Existing Revenue budget. Future investment will be sourced from grant funding

---

Personnel
1. Number of staff (current and additional): 1
2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 28 p/w

---

Legal
1. Legal Requirement: None
2. Call-in: Not Appliable – No Executive decision.

Procurement
1. Summary of Procurement Implications: None

Property
1. Summary of Property Implications: None

Carbon Reduction and Social Value

1. Summary of Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications: Digital connectivity is a growing necessity and the proposals support digital inclusion. With better access to high speed, reliable broadband or mobile connections; residents and businesses can access public/Council services more conveniently/efficiently or purchase goods online at a lower cost. People can work from

home, reducing the necessity for travel and commuting to minimise their carbon footprint. Businesses can grow, become more productive and make goods available online. The improved digital infrastructure will also support any future developments to improve the management of Council services such as libraries, environmental monitoring for air quality, flooding, pedestrian flow or parking spaces.

───

Impact on the Local Economy

1. Summary of Local Economy Implications: A significant positive impact on the local economy is anticipated, due to the improved digital connectivity for residents, businesses & visitors; including additional digital infrastructure investment attracted to Bromley. These measures will serve to future-proof Bromley.

───

Impact on Health and Wellbeing

1. Summary of Health and Wellbeing Implications: Being digitally inclusive means barriers to digital access that can cause digital poverty and negatively impact health & well-being, are removed for all social groups; so that access to use of information & communication technologies are experienced by all. This includes access to civic participation, education, healthcare, skills, training, home-working; as well as the purchase of goods conveniently online at a lower cost and generally communicating with others (particularly those who are vulnerable, isolated and quarantining family and friends).

───

Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users or customers (current and projected): All persons in Bromley who use internet or mobile products and services including in the workplace and at home.

───

Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A – This is an information only update on the approved Digital Infrastructure Work Plan.
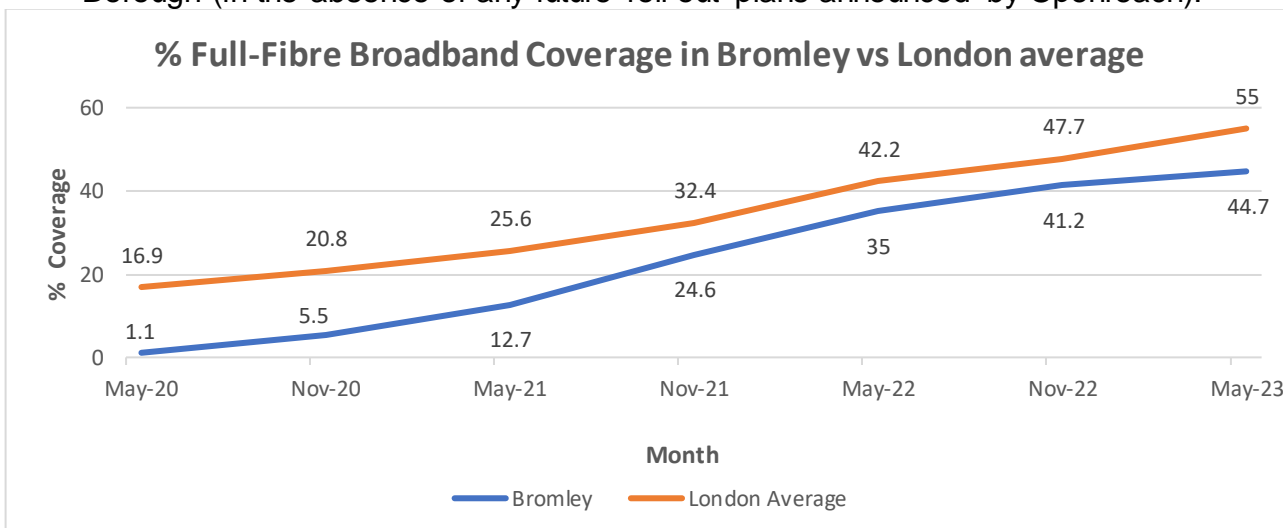
3. COMMENTARY

3.1 In February 2021, members of the Executive approved the Digital Infrastructure Work Plan (DIWP), which sets out a way to move forwards and improve Digital Connectivity within the borough in support of the government's aims for the benefit of Bromley residents and businesses.

3.2 Digital connectivity is critical for the ongoing social and economic prosperity of Bromley. Interventions continue to be made by the Council through the DIWP, in order to support the roll-out of gigabit capable connectivity (internet speeds of over 1 gigabit per second), notably through facilitating the development of:

- Full-fibre to the premises broadband (FTTP)

- 4G and 5G mobile networks

Full-Fibre To The Premises Broadband (FTTP)

3.3 The Council's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Openreach has expedited their initial 'Fibre First' commercial roll-out, which has resulted in the upgrade of 5 local exchanges in Bromley (i.e. Farnborough, Orpington, Biggin Hill, Chislehurst and Hayes Common) to full-fibre to the premises broadband. The 4 remaining local exchanges (ie. Bromley Central, Beckenham, Sydenham and West Wickham) were not announced for upgrade during this initial roll-out by Openreach.

3.4 Publicly available data on full-fibre broadband coverage across the borough (from the ThinkBroadband website), currently shows an increase from 1% in May 2020 (prior to the MOU and Openreach rollout) to almost **45%** in May 2023 (an increase of over 3% during the past several months since November 2022). The corresponding average coverage across London during the same period, shows an increase from 17% in May 2020 to almost 55% in May 2023. This highlights the significant progress made in Bromley over the past 3 years to narrow the gap in coverage with other boroughs.

3.5 However, it should be noted that the rate of increase in the deployment of full-fibre broadband within Bromley has shown a recent reduction, in comparison with previous figures reported and the London average overall (see graph below). This decreased level of activity coincides with the completion of the initial full-fibre roll-out programme by Openreach. It also suggests that alternative approaches should be adopted to implement the required connectivity across the Borough (in the absence of any future roll-out plans announced by Openreach).

Source: ThinkBroadband

3.6 Momentum on full-fibre broadband infrastructure needs to be maintained in Bromley to keep pace with other London boroughs, who have benefited from additional infrastructure networks from alternative providers. For example, in other boroughs where Councils maintain ownership of their social housing units, they are more readily able to provide the necessary master wayleave agreements for their residential buildings. Consequently, this has encouraged investment in full-fibre upgrades to multi-dwelling units/MDUs by other providers such as Community Fibre. Unlike some other boroughs, nearly all the full-fibre broadband availability in Bromley so far, is due to the initial Openreach rollout programme (Openreach provides approximately 50% of the full-fibre coverage by providers across the London boroughs).

3.7 Another key contributing factor that has led the deployment of significant amounts of full-fibre broadband infrastructure in other boroughs, has been the development of their **dark-fibre** (private) network infrastructure. This has been enabled through grant funding made available to Councils for investment in their public sector assets (e.g the Strategic Infrastructure Pool/SIP & Strategic Investment Fund/SIF). The additional full-fibre broadband infrastructure capacity produced from the dark-fibre in turn generates additional commercial investment to further expand the network for the benefit of other businesses and residents. This is because the dark-fibre extensions led by the boroughs themselves resolve financial viability issues for the providers in geographical areas that are harder to reach.

3.8 Council officers have been working proactively with the broadband network infrastructure build teams at Openreach to identify any multi-dwelling units or commercial business/industrial parks in their planning stages. The objective is to investigate local sites that may be potential candidates for future upgrades, as part of their multi-dwelling/occupancy unit roll-out plans. Any additional infrastructure deployed at these sites will also provide opportunities for other service providers to offer their services through the Openreach open access arrangements in place.

3.9 In addition to facilitating opportunities for negotiations taking place between infrastructure providers and the local social housing landlords of multi-dwelling units/MDUs (residential blocks); the Council has also been continuing to engage with Community Fibre in relation to their recent proposal to upgrade **approximately 50,000** single-dwelling units/SDUs (houses) in key areas across Bromley during this initial year of their SDU programme. The aim is to ensure that relevant Council teams continue to support Community Fibre to deploy the enhanced digital infrastructure to homes, along with any local businesses that may benefit from the new infrastructure, as quickly as possible. Community Fibre are proposing to make use of the existing Openreach ducts and poles network infrastructure where possible. This will be facilitated by the current Openreach Physical Infrastructure Access/PIA open access arrangements in place; which will minimise the amount of additional civil/construction works and disruption experienced. Discussions are also taking place to investigate the upgrade of broadband infrastructure at sites with higher concentrations of businesses (eg local business/industrial parks and town centres).

3.10 The Council has recently submitted a proposal to GLA to access up to **£1m** from their Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). The funding is available to target investment by broadband infrastructure providers to develop full-fibre infrastructure by connecting Council sites, or building assets via a local **dark-fibre** network. It will also enable the identified infrastructure provider to commercialise the additional full-fibre capacity and passive infrastructure deployed under this project. This will stimulate further commercial investment to increase the coverage for residents or businesses. The project will increase the speed and connectivity at key Council owned sites to improve productivity, increase the range of digital services, reduce costs and future-proof the Council to make better use of Smart/IOT technology. It will also help to increase the general full-fibre footprint across the borough and address gaps in connectivity at key or strategic locations. The project is subject to approval by GLA (anticipated in May 2023), along with a review of the committee report on SIF by the RRH PDS Committee in June; prior to
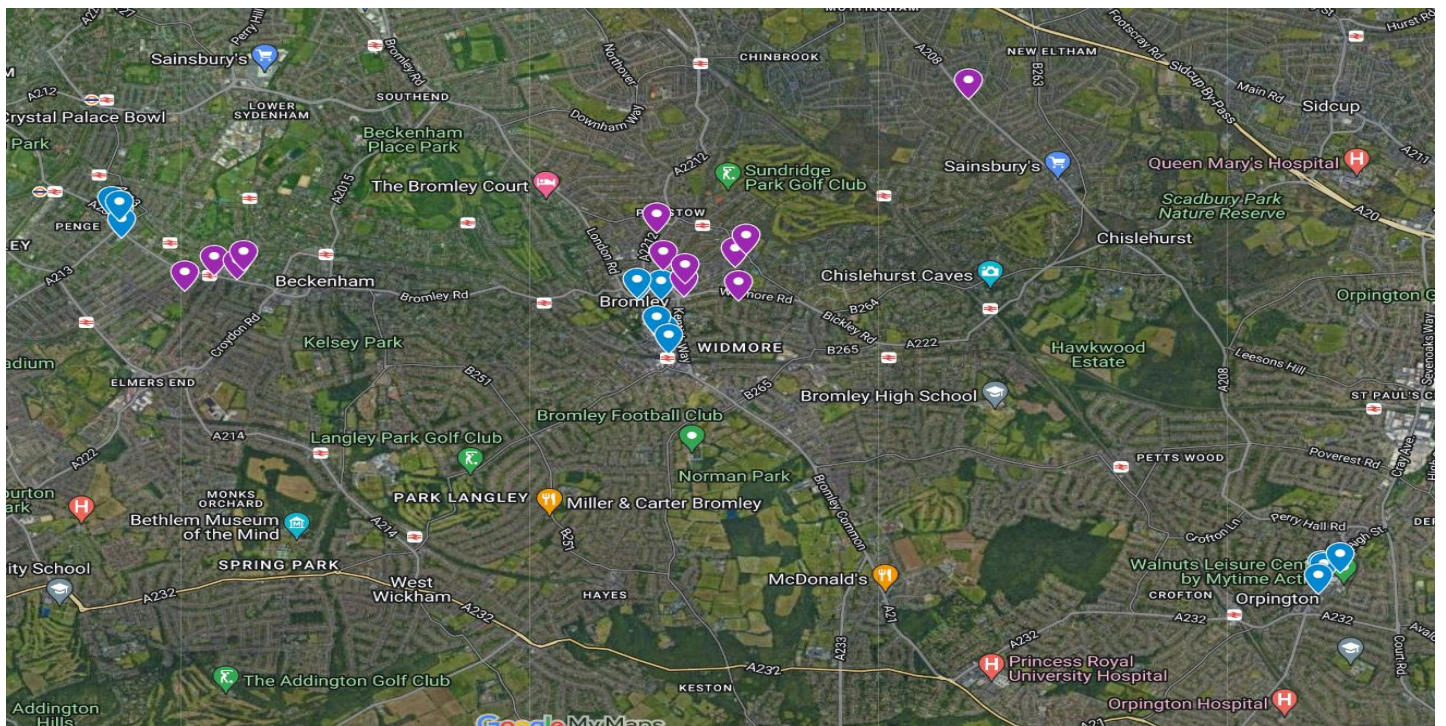
approval by Executive Committee in July 2023.

3.11 The findings from the recent BDUK Public Review/Consultation (Project Gigabit) about gigabit broadband availability across London have been recently published. The results confirm the many **premises at key postcode locations in Bromley** previously identified and reported by the Council (and other local stakeholders) as having gaps in gigabit coverage, in response to the consultation. These 'Gigabit White' **premises** at these postcode locations are currently identified for additional full-fibre broadband investment by BDUK, since there are presently no plans for full-fibre upgrades by infrastructure providers within the next 3 years. However, some premises at other local postcode locations have been identified as 'Gigabit Under Review'; as there are current or planned commercial broadband coverage by providers (but their build plans have not been verified by BDUK as yet).

4G & 5G Mobile Networks – Small Cells on Lamp Columns Infrastructure

3.12 To attract MNOs to improve mobile coverage in the borough, Bromley was one of the first local authorities to develop its own Bromley Digital Infrastructure Toolkit, which includes an Open Access agreement (in line with the Digital Infrastructure Toolkit published by DCMS). There are currently agreements between Bromley and 4 mobile small cell infrastructure providers (i.e Freshwave, Cellnex, BT/EE and Ontix). The deployment is totally commercially driven and depends on the demand expressed by the MNOs to mobile small cell infrastructure providers.

3.13 The **14** original 4G/5G mobile small cells were deployed by Freshwave at high street locations in 3 local town centres (i.e Bromley Town Centre, Penge and Orpington) during the initial year in 2021/22. The latest **13** 4G/5G mobile small cells are presently being deployed by Freshwave to increase the coverage and capacity across town centres (including Beckenham town centre) by July 2023. The map below shows the location of the 4G/5G mobile small cells.

Key		
4G/5G Mobile Small Cells Existing (14)		📍
4G/5G Mobile Small Cells In-progress (13)		📍

3.14 The Council has received a total of **£15,350** in income from Freshwave for the deployment of the above 4G/5G mobile small cells (in accordance with the guidance from DCMS). The breakdown is as follows:

- a one-off expression of interest fee of **£3,100** in FY 2021-22 (i.e £1,700 project co-ordination fee plus £1,400 which is based on £100 per piece of apparatus/small cell initially proposed),
- a recurring annual income of **£4,200** for the initial 14 cells in FY 2021-22 (i.e £300 for the 1st cell on an urban column site and £250 for the 2nd cell on an urban column site)
- a recurring annual income of **£4,200** for the initial 14 cells in FY 2022-23
- a recurring annual income of **£3,850** for the latest batch of 13 cells in FY 2022-23

4G & 5G Mobile Networks – Macro Cells on Masts & Towers Infrastructure

3.15 Cellnex UK have recently obtained planning approval to install **2 new masts** in the Anerley/Penge area. The aim is to improve 4G/5G mobile connectivity for both mobile phone users on Network Rail mainline trains (e.g London to Brighton Mainline railway), as well as residents and businesses in the surrounding area. This follows earlier engagement with the Council, including support from the Economic Development and Planning teams. Further to the initial guidance received, pre-applications for the required infrastructure were submitted by Cellnex UK in March 2022. The pre-application report recommendations were addressed, prior to the submission of the full planning applications in February 2023 with the approvals granted in April 2023.

4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN

4.1 Improving digital connectivity throughout the borough will increase the availability of online services to a wider audience, including those vulnerable adults and children.

4.2 Improving the reliability and speed of broadband connections, particularly in wards where there are indices of deprivation including to public services, will support better access to online services. This will be supported by ICT training for residents at the Council's libraries and resource shops

5. TRANSFORMATION/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Making Bromley Even Better Priorities supported include: (i) For children and young People to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home; (ii) For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices; (iii) For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper; (iv) For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future; (v) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is no direct financial implication to this report, the report is for information and provides progress updates on the Digital Infrastructure works

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Members of the Renewal, Recreation and Housing PDS are requested to review this report, which sets out progress in relation to the delivery of the Digital Infrastructure Work Plan within the borough of Bromley. In accordance with Part 4 of the Constitution, the Terms of Reference of this Committee includes, "The development of the Council's plans within the policy framework that make up this portfolio and exploring whether such plans are being achieved effectively."

7.2 The Digital Infrastructure Work Plan (DIWP) is comprised of the Bromley Digital Infrastructure Toolkit and a Memorandum of Understanding with Openreach which detail the policies and processes to facilitate deployment of digital infrastructure in the borough. There are no immediate procurement issues as LBB are conferring rights rather than procuring services.

7.3 The property agreements that the Council agree with communications network operators which give them rights to access its land and buildings for network installation and maintenance are regulated by the Electronic Communications Code (the Code), as set out in Schedule 3A of the Communications Act 2003. Any works and improvements must also comply with any relevant highways, planning and other legislation.

8. CARBON REDUCTION/SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Digital connectivity is a growing necessity and the proposals support digital inclusion. With better access to high speed, reliable broadband or mobile connections; residents and businesses can access public/Council services more conveniently/efficiently or purchase goods online at a lower cost. People can work from home, reducing the necessity for travel and commuting to minimise their carbon footprint. Businesses can grow, become more productive and make goods available online. The improved digital infrastructure will also support any future developments to improve the management of Council services such as environmental monitoring for air quality, flooding, pedestrian flow or parking spaces.

Detail here any environmental, social or economic implications that have been considered as part of this proposal. This section should consider requirements of the 2012 Public Services (Social Value) Act if procuring goods or services. Authors should detail how the recommendations in this report will lead to a positive impact in terms of the Council's Carbon Reduction ambitions.

9. IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

9.1 A significant positive impact on the local economy is anticipated, due to the improved digital connectivity for residents, businesses & visitors; including additional digital infrastructure investment attracted to Bromley. These measures will serve to future-proof Bromley; since a healthy economy is becoming increasingly hinged upon digital infrastructure that enables businesses or residents to access fast, reliable and high-capacity internet, which facilitates increased productivity, alongside a wider range of services/applications. Moreover, research has shown that access to affordable gigabit capable connections could see SME productivity increase by 7-10%. Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) found that 94% of small business owners rate a reliable broadband connection as critical to the success of their business. With house prices already affected by connections to higher broadband speeds (and increased agile/home-working); it is expected that demand for faster connections will affect where people choose to live and work, or where businesses/developers choose to invest. Mobile broadband is generally associated with positive impacts, such as higher GDP, along with increased employment. Increased broadband speeds could add £17 billion to UK output by 2024.

10. IMPACT ON HEALTH AND WELLBEING

10.1 Digital connectivity is a growing necessity, with better access to high speed and reliable broadband and mobile connections, residents can access public services more conveniently and purchase goods online at a lower cost. People can work from home, reducing the necessity for travel and commuting; business can grow, become more productive and make goods available online. Improved connectivity is also linked to improved tourism, as people can find out more information about local places, share experiences on social media. With services (including the Council's) increasingly moving online, access to fast and reliable internet connections is a social issue as well as an economic one, with insufficient provision of infrastructure having potentially detrimental effects on individuals and households. Being digitally inclusive means barriers to digital access are broken down for all social groups and access to use of information & communication technologies are experienced by all. This includes access to civic participation, education, healthcare, skills, training and generally communicating with others. Greater digital connectivity allows for enhanced communication with potentially vulnerable, isolated and quarantining family and friends. Exclusion of any of these can cause significant and obvious social disadvantages, known as digital poverty. Official guidance from Ofcom has also been published clarifying the nature of the mobile technology in use and its compliance with guidelines on International Standards (which have also been endorsed by Public Health England).

11. CUSTOMER IMPACT

11.1 All persons in Bromley who use internet or mobile products and services including in the workplace and at home.

Non-Applicable Headings:	Personnel Implications; Ward Councillor Views; Procurement Implications; Property Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	Digital Infrastructure Work Plan (Report No. DRR20/017) - Tuesday, 2nd February 2021