

**Homes and Neighbourhoods**

**Islington Council**

**222 Upper Street N1 1XR**

**Report of: Ian Swift, Director of Housing Needs and Strategy**

**Meeting of: Housing Scrutiny Committee**

**Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

## **Islington Fibre Broadband**

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. Note the content of the briefing report and to critically appraise the work conducted to date and the planned work of the service.

### **Introduction**

To deliver Islington Labour's manifesto commitment ensuring all estates and Islington Council Street properties in the borough have access to high speed, cheap broadband, Islington Broadband is a partnership between the Homes and Neighbourhoods service and full-fibre broadband providers to offer faster, more reliable internet services to our 36,000 council homes as well as non-residential housing assets such as community centres and concierge offices.

### **Update on programme delivery**

Since the first overview provided to Members in February (postponed from the Autumn meeting), this document provides an update on the installation programme as of the 1st of March 2023.

There are currently over 400 live connections available to council street properties in Clerkenwell because of the wayleave being signed with Hyperoptic, Community Fibre have 60 live connections at Spriggs and Barratt House with a further 400 coming online by May 2023, Circa 700 units have been surveyed and are waiting to be built and a further 5000 units allocated for survey The pipeline for go live properties is set out in Appendix 1 with further information to be made available as the programme gathers pace.

## **Programme overview**

The Broadband Delivery Team have been working with two providers – Community Fibre and Hyperoptic on their Phase 1 programmes. Commencing in the south of the borough, each provider's build does depend on their existing infrastructure and local capacity and so the programmes remain indicative until the surveying stage is reached and the provider's installation teams are able to mobilise. In this way estates not previously included in the Phase 1 programme in the Tufnell Park Ward - Brecknock Road, York Way and Elthorne Estates are also being surveyed at present by Community Fibre.

The delivery team has made sure that the providers are linked in with our Tenant Management Organisations at first survey stages (Gambier, Stafford Cripps and Wenlake to date) and they continue to provide tight oversight of the programme through the surveying, design and sign off stages. There has also been significant liaison between VCS (Voluntary & Community Sector), IMAX (Income Maximisation) and other internal stakeholders to ensure that maximum community value is achieved as ISPs (Internet Service Providers) rollout their infrastructure across the borough.

## **G-Network**

G-Network have been visible on streets across the borough and residents, especially those in street properties, are keen to connect to their services. Wayleave negotiations are now complete, and the final draft of the wayleave is with G-Network for internal approval before it is signed and returned to Islington Council. We expect this document imminently and have had regular mobilisation meetings in anticipation of rollout works starting straight away.

## **BT Openreach**

Our Expression of Interest exercise was carried out in early 2022 which set out our requirements of working on our estates, installing equipment in our buildings, and providing community value to the borough. Since then, operational meetings with BT Openreach commenced in September 2022, but have been since suspended as, despite cordial and open discussions during our meetings, their Openreach team returned the master wayleave, which is now a working document with the other two ISPs, stating that they were unwilling to commit to any social value delivery, wanted to council to obtain all statutory permissions on their behalf and removed the obligation to cover the council's reasonable costs in facilitating the rollout.

We continue negotiations and are strengthening our position through sharing information with other London local authorities and Central London Forward<sup>1</sup>.

## **Community benefits**

Our colleagues in Inclusive Economy & Jobs Community Partnerships and Local Economies teams have been introduced to Community Fibre and Hyperoptic to develop and take forward initiatives including connections with schools to explore suitable training and support,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://centrallondonforward.gov.uk/>

development of careers events for employment hubs later in the year, dissemination of affordable product and discounted tariff scheme and support for local businesses.

We have also secured free connections and services for our community centres, reception centres and other community assets which will start to come online in the next few weeks and months as the programme progresses.

The Steering Group will continue monitor how these benefits are realised over the course of the programme with the expectation that the providers will report progress. The next meeting has been scheduled for April 2023.

## **Reporting**

Now that the working relationships, ways of working and information sharing are better established between the council and the providers we are in the process of setting up monitoring systems to provide stakeholders and with more readily available progress reports.