



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Super-connected cities – business briefing event
Date:	8 June 2012
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance & Resources
Contact Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development

Purpose of Paper	
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the council's bid for funding from the Urban Broadband Fund to make Belfast a super-connected city and to advise Members of a business briefing event that will take place in City Hall on Monday 11 June at 9:30am.

Relevant Background Information	
2.1	Members will recall at the Strategic Policy and Resources meeting on 20 January it was agreed the Council would lead on a bid to access money from the Government's Urban Broadband Fund (UBF).
2.2	As part of the proposals to access the funding, Belfast City Council submitted a bid to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in February 2012 showing how we would use super-connected status to drive forward growth with particular focus on employment zones and city-wide high-speed mobile connectivity.
2.3	At this stage, the council has been guaranteed £6m to deliver the project but could receive up to £13.7m.
2.4	The task for us now is to turn our proposal that was submitted to DCMS in February into a detailed business case which must be submitted as part of our final bid for project funding before the deadline of 3 August.
2.5	The final award received by the council will be based on accurate costing of the agreed infrastructure investments and the project is expected to commence in Autumn 2012, following confirmation of the full funding award by DCMS in September.

Key Issues	
-------------------	--

3.1	Under Super-Connected Belfast we aim to ensure access to broadband for every business and community across the city by 2015.
3.2	Whilst many areas of Belfast already have access to broadband with speeds of up to 24 Mbps (megabytes per second) this project will provide city wide access to speeds of up to 80Mbps (superfast broadband) and 100Mbps (ultrafast broadband).
3.3	The Super-connected Cities project will provide:
	1. 100% access to superfast broadband across the entire city.
	2. Targeted Ultra-fast broadband for those sectors that deploy large volumes of data, such as the creative industries.
3.4	3. Wireless infrastructure across the city.
	Members are reminded that faster broadband will bring huge benefits to businesses and residents including:
	Potential benefits for businesses:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased productivity and competitiveness; • improved access to information and facilitation of innovation; • creation of platforms for business-to-business collaboration; • improved access to markets and opportunities worldwide; • development of the knowledge-based economy; • increased flexible working and reducing business travel and commuting; • improved access to education and training; and • provision of opportunities for businesses to become producers of ultrafast-enabled content and applications.
	Potential benefits for residents:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quicker and more reliable online transactions; • uninterrupted streaming of video and improved live television viewing; • free phone calls on the Internet; • improved access to education tools; and • improved home working connection.
3.5	Education, profile-raising and demand stimulation is a vital part of the UBF programme and will be important in the assessment of our second stage proposal.
3.6	By August we need to have detailed and realistic plans demonstrating how demand stimulation and registration activities will generate greater demand by businesses and residences for ultrafast broadband services, aiming for 50% take-up across all sectors.
3.7	Our strategy for motivating and equipping business and communities with the desire and right skills to fully adopt broadband and use of ICT has a number of key elements including a significant targeted promotional campaign, a business support programme, a community support programme and a skills development programme covering business and public service users.
3.8	As part of our promotional campaign we will host a 'Super-connected Belfast business briefing' event in City Hall on Monday 11 June at 9:30am to which all

3.8	members are invited to attend.
3.9	The purpose of this event is to inform the business sector of our plans to roll out ultrafast broadband and wireless services across the city and what this means for their business. Speakers will include:
3.10	Arlene Foster, MLA Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment; Councillor Deirdre Hargey, Chair of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Sinclair Stockman, Digital NI 2020; and Colin Williams, Creative Director of local children's television production company, Sixteen South, will outline how access to faster broadband has impacted on how they do business.
	A copy of the e-invite is attached in Appendix 1.

	Resource Implications
4.1	<u>Financial</u> There are no financial implications attached to this report.
4.2	<u>Human Resources</u> There are resource implications in terms of Council committing both officer and Member time in preparing our second stage submission and attending the business briefing event on Monday 11 June.

5	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
5.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report.

6	Recommendations
6.1	Members are requested to note the contents of this report.

7	Decision Tracking
	There is no decision tracking attached to this report.

8	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Invitation to attend a Super-connected Belfast business briefing.

9	Abbreviations
	DCMS - Department of Culture, Media and Sport UBF – Urban Broadband Fund