



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Super Connected Belfast Update</b>
<b>Date:</b>	23 August 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance & Resources
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Paul Gribben, Head of Information Services Belfast

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.0	Members will recall on 24 May 2013 the Committee was informed of the changes that had been made to our super-Connected Belfast project by the Department of Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). These changes required a revised project plan to be submitted to DCMS for approval.
1.2	Following the submission of the revised plan the Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, Ed Vaizey MP, wrote to the Council confirming that our proposals have been approved in principle and that funding for the following projects would be made available: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Up to £9.8m for a voucher scheme</li><li>• Up to £1.31m on a wireless concession for the city centre</li><li>• Up to £2.35m on wifi in public buildings.</li></ul>
1.3	The Minister also assessed our voucher preparations to be strong and requested that Belfast form one of the first cities to market test the voucher scheme. A copy of the Minister's letter is provided at Appendix 1.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<b>Belfast Voucher Scheme</b> <p>The voucher scheme provides up to £3,000 to a business to enable them to access ultrafast broadband. Companies can choose from a range of potential telecoms suppliers who deliver broadband services in their area. The aim of the market testing of the voucher scheme is for DCMS to ascertain whether this will generate objections from telecoms suppliers and to demonstrate if demand for a voucher scheme is high enough to roll out on a national level. The market testing phase will run from 1 August 2013 to 30 September 2013.</p>

2.2	<p>Given the very short timeframe set by DCMS, as well as the need to demonstrate a significant level of demand, in line with our original funding approach, a number of target locations were identified for the market-testing phase. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cathedral Quarter</li> <li>• City East / East Belfast Enterprise</li> <li>• Ormeau Business Park</li> <li>• Ortus</li> <li>• Argyle Business Park</li> <li>• North City Business Centre</li> <li>• Harbour Estate.</li> </ul> <p>2.3 All SMEs, third sector and public sector organisations based within these locations are eligible to apply for a voucher during the market-testing phase. It is anticipated that the scheme will be rolled out city-wide from November 2013, following a review of the market tests and subject to approval by DCMS. As part of our market testing phase we are taking registrations from outside the target zones to gauge demand and to inform our future roll out plans.</p> <p>2.4 Full details of the voucher scheme can be found on the Council’s website at <a href="#">Voucher scheme</a>.</p> <p><b>Metro Wireless</b></p> <p>2.5 Work is well underway to progress a procurement to award an exclusive concession contract for the provision of a public city centre wireless solution.</p> <p>2.6 We are currently specifying a technical design for a mini-pillar that will provide a 24 hour power supply and broadband connectivity to a wireless access point mounted on a street lighting column. This will be passed to Roads Service, NIE and telecoms suppliers to be signed off as an agreed technical solution at the beginning of September.</p> <p><b>Public Wi-Fi Hotspots</b></p> <p>2.7 A number of the organisations who operate buildings to be considered for this programme have signed ‘Memorandums of Intent’ during the creation of our initial bid. It is our intention to re-engage these organisations with further details of this programme and to ascertain their current positions, requirements, and any constraints before completing a specification for the procurement of this strand of the Super-Connected Belfast scheme.</p> <p>2.8 <b>Demand Stimulation</b> The Director of Development is currently working on a demand stimulation programme to support the Voucher Scheme. The purposes of the programme are to raise awareness of the infrastructure investment and provide targeted mentoring support to help businesses get online or use the technologies to help them work more efficiently.</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
3.1	There are no specific Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
4.1	Members are asked to:  Note the progress of the Super Connected Belfast Project.

<b>5</b>	<b>Documents attached</b>
	A copy of the Minister's letter is provided at Appendix 1

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
	Officer responsible: Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources