

Written statement of a key decision
Cabinet member environment, economy and skills

Title	Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-2022
Decision maker	Cabinet member environment, economy and skills Information about cabinet, including the names and contact details of the cabinet members, can be found here: http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=251
Date of decision	27 December 2019
Report exemption class	Open
Reason for being a key decision	This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant having regard to: the strategic nature of the decision; and / or whether the outcome will have an impact, for better or worse, on the amenity of the community or quality of service provided by the authority to a significant number of people living or working in the locality (two or more wards) affected.
A notice was served in accordance with Part 3 (Key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.	
General exception or special urgency (as defined in the constitution)	No
Purpose	To approve the latest iteration of the Fastershire Broadband Strategy which will direct the approaches available to the Fastershire project to drive the deployment of high-speed broadband infrastructure throughout Herefordshire and Gloucestershire through to 2022. The Strategy introduces a new Stage (Stage 5) which proposes the establishment of a Grant available to communities that remain outside of any current plan to be upgraded to superfast broadband. The grant will utilise a Dynamic Purchasing System to identify the best value supplier of services and will be offered on a first come first served basis. The Fastershire project is a partnership between Herefordshire Council, Gloucestershire County and national government to provide a fibre broadband network where commercial companies would not use their own investment. For Herefordshire, from a starting point in 2012 of 0.6%

	<p>premises with access to superfast broadband, coverage now stands at 90%. The revised strategy aims to continue to increase the coverage through delivery of existing contracts along with a new grant scheme to communities introduced in 2020. Commercial providers will also be operating their own schemes which will add to the superfast and ultrafast coverage.</p>
Decision	<p>That:</p> <p>(a) the Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-22 at appendix 1, as amended by supplemental paper 1, be agreed;</p> <p>(b) the criteria for Fastershire Community Broadband Grant are agreed (paragraphs 21-27); and</p> <p>(c) the Assistant Director Corporate Support be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the grants scheme and award grants up to a maximum of £500,000 in accordance with agreed criteria and available funds.</p>
Reason for the decision	<p>As set out in the report and supplemental paper. Documents relating to this decision are available at http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mglssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=50031473</p>
Options considered	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the broadband strategy is not agreed. This is not recommended as there would be a policy vacuum in a high profile area that remains of critical importance to many residents and businesses, along with being included in the new corporate plan in its draft form. 2. There is focus on Gigabit Capable deployment only from this point onwards. The strategy could seek to apply this to all premises. It is not recommended that this applies to premises that already have a 30Mbps capability. This approach would have severe state aid implications and would see areas with good capability upgraded before those that are in desperate need. Instead, every opportunity will be taken to deploy full-fibre or other Gbps capable technology to those premises which currently cannot achieve superfast. 3. The council could elect to stop working on improving broadband access beyond the end of the current contracts. This is not recommended as despite predicted coverage of 96% at the end of the current contracts in Herefordshire premises will remain that have limited access to reasonable broadband speeds. While the 10Mbps Universal Service Obligation will go some way to meet the gap, there is no indication of time

	scales and 10Mbps will soon be seen to be inadequate. Therefore, this approach is not recommended as there is no guarantee that remaining premises will be reached.
Declarations of interest (see ▪ below)	
Call-in expiry date (decisions are not subject to call-in where special urgency provisions apply)	6 January 2020

Councillor:	Date 27 December 2019
Cabinet member environment, economy and skills (Councillor Trish Marsh)	

- a record of any conflict of interest declared by any executive member who is consulted by the member which relates to the decision;
- and
- in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of dispensation granted.