

RIVENHALL PARISH COUNCIL.

Superfast Essex Broadband Project – Delivering Next Generation Access Broadband to Greater Essex.

Update July 2012.

Background.

Government's ambition is for the UK to have the best broadband connectivity in Europe by 2015 with 90% of the population being able to access Superfast Broadband and the remainder having access to substantially improved broadband at speeds of no less than 2Megabits per second.

In order to achieve this, Government are making £530 million of public money available to invest in telecoms infrastructure and county councils are expected to take the lead in procuring a telecoms sector delivery partner to provide the necessary upgrades.

Essex has been allocated £6.46 million by Government, which Essex County Council has agreed to match. The yet to be selected delivery partner will be expected to match this public sector subsidy with £13 million of their money so totalling £26 million of investment in telecoms infrastructure.

Significant developments.

Since March 2012 there have been a number of significant developments for the Project.

- On 26th June, the Secretary of State approved Superfast Essex, the Local Broadband Plan for Essex, Southend and Thurrock. The document will be available on-line and a county-wide survey will be carried out to assess where demand for Superfast broadband is.
- The Superfast Essex Broadband Board took the view that the procurement of the delivery partner would be done via the National Procurement Framework. This Framework has been set up in line with European Commission and World Trade Organisation competition and state aid rules. The suppliers on the framework have been selected subject to rigorous capacity and resource criteria and have had to satisfy Government that they have the ability to deliver the necessary upgrades on a national scale.
- Two suppliers are now known to be willing and are qualified to be on the national framework; BT and Fujitsu. The framework was signed by BT and Fujitsu week commencing 2nd July, however the European Commission is still to grant state aid approval so no contracts are allowed to be awarded off that framework.

- Government are keen, however, to bring all county councils up to a stage where they are in a position to go out to tender as soon as state aid approval has been granted.

A procurement process will then be undertaken that will award a contract to the supplier that best fulfils the aims and aspirations of the Local Broadband Plan.

Rural Community Broadband Fund.

A further tranche of the Rural Community Broadband Fund was announced by Government in April. The deadline for this was 6th July, however, until the public market consultation has been carried out, it is still unclear what locations are eligible for state aid funding. To that end, whilst the parishes that *may* be eligible have been alerted to the fund, it is envisaged that any applications will be made to the third tranche in the autumn.

Ultrafast Cities.

Further to the Government's rural broadband programme, in May a new initiative was launched to fund £50 million to 27 cities nationally. This money is to be used to increase broadband capacity in the city centres so that ultra-fast speeds (80-100Mbps) can be more widely received.

England's newest city, Chelmsford, qualifies for this funding and the City Council is currently considering a bid, the more detailed parameters of which are being worked up.

Any Questions?

Do not hesitate to contact Philip Wilson at Essex County Council (01245 424283, Philip.Wilson@essex.gov.uk) for further information.