

# Community Planning Implementation Fund Grant Request (Executive Decision)

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## Purpose of the Report

To consider a request for a capital contribution towards the costs of delivering a local solution to providing superfast broadband in Cucklington.

## Public Interest

Awarding grants is a key way that SSDC supports and helps to deliver community projects sponsored by parishes and voluntary community organisations in the towns and villages across Area East.

## Background

Area East Committee has retained funding which is only available to communities with locally adopted community/parish plans and this is intended to help with implementing priority projects.

## Recommendations

- 1) Members agree a contribution of **up to** £4500 (50% of the total project costs) from the Community Planning Implementation budget to Cucklington Parish Meeting towards the costs of installing the infrastructure to enable superfast broadband in the parish and surrounding area, subject to the standard conditions set out in appendix A.

Cucklington Parish Meeting has applied for a grant towards the costs of installing the infrastructure required to enable a superfast broadband service in the parish and surrounding area.

## Parish Precept information

Parish	Cucklington
Parish population	173 (based on 2011 Census)
No. of Households	89
Precept 16/17	£1,250
Band D Charge 16/17	£13.42

## The Project

Cucklington is served from two exchanges:- Bourton and Wincanton with typical Broadband speeds of below 2Mbs. The relevant cabinets are fibre enabled however, as each are approximately 4.5km from Cucklington, they cannot supply the village without significant further infrastructure. BT has quoted £175,000 to bring fibre to both halves of the village.

The applicant states that they believe that both halves of Cucklington will not be covered under phase 1 of the Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS) roll out. There is also no guarantee that both halves will be covered under phase 2.

Improved broadband was identified as a priority in the Cucklington Parish Plan which was produced in 2012/13.

“Some 90% of households have broadband and as a rural community living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century broadband is an essential requirement of everyday life.

Significantly and somewhat disappointingly 66% of those households are not satisfied with our broadband speed. For Cucklington a recent test on the 01747 exchange has shown our download speed is c2.4Mbs-1 and our upload speed is 0.4Mbs-1 and for the 01963 exchange comparable figures of 1.2Mbs-1 and 0.1Mbs-1.

This is an issue which needs to be addressed as matter of importance. It should be worked through collaboration with other 01747 and 01963 subscribers. This will involve lobbying the internet service providers and MPs.

Having researched the various options available, the Parish Meeting has agreed to move forward with a company called Wessex Internet (WI) who can provide a fixed point wireless delivery system to individual properties. The superfast internet feed will be sourced by a high capacity point to point backhaul link from Hambledon Hill to the south.

The proposal is to mount antenna on short wooden poles sited in the hedge line on the steep high ground at Coneygore Hill that faces Cucklington. The landowner has agreed to grant a 25 year lease for the equipment and will make the land available. Each property with line of sight to the antenna will be able to connect to the service for a standard installation charge. It is hoped that the Connecting Devon and Somerset voucher scheme will be available to householders to help with these costs and encourage good take up.

The project has been assessed against the agreed criteria and the following scores apply.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>Score</b>
A Eligibility	<b>Y/N</b>	<b>Y</b>
B Equalities Impact	7	5
C Need for Project	5	4
D Capacity of Organisation	15	11
E Financial need	7	4
F Innovation	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>28</b>

Projects scoring above 22 points are eligible for SSDC support under the current policies.

<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>% Funding of Total Scheme Cost</b>	<b>Amount of Funding</b>	<b>Status</b>
Parish Meeting	50%	£4500	Secured
SSDC (Area East)	50%	£4500	Applied for
<b>Total Scheme Cost</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£9000</b>	

The figures above include VAT which might be reclaimed by the Parish Meeting. Some advice has been sought but if this is the case then the grant amount will reduce proportionately.

There are possibly other sources of funding for this type of project however, the local contribution has been underwritten by nine local individuals on the basis that the work will progress as soon as possible to take advantage of the opportunity to work with Wessex Internet. This is considered time sensitive as the Cucklington installation fits in with other work to extend the network.

### **Superfast broadband**

The Connecting Devon and Somerset programme is on track to extend superfast broadband to around 90% of premises by the end of 2016. CDS are seeking solutions for reducing the 'final 10%' that will not be reached by high-speed fibre broadband. They will do this through the Superfast Extension Programme for which CDS has been allocated an additional £22.7 million for extending coverage to 95% of premises by the end of 2017. They are hoping for a partnership to be agreed through the procurement process of a mixture of wireless, satellite and fibre options.

Please note: The delivery area for Phase 2 of the CDS superfast broadband roll out has not been confirmed and so it is possible that superfast broadband will be delivered by the CDS programme.

Many, if not all community & parish plans in Area East have identified broadband speed as an issue and it is likely that other rural parishes will want to investigate and deliver local solutions to provide superfast broadband. Whilst the application meets the criteria for support from the Community Planning Implementation Fund, members might want to consider the use of a loan rather than a grant to help ensure that possible interest and demand can be met.

For small loans of £5,000 or less, the approval procedure may be delegated to the Area Portfolio Holder, in consultation with the Area Development Manager. The interest rate will be the relevant PWLB rate and the loans should be guaranteed by the Town or Parish Council, or similar trustees.

The maximum repayment period will be 10 years and all loans will be repaid on a repayment basis so that the loan is repaid across the loan period at instalment rates approved in advance.

This would however result in the whole scheme effectively being funded by loans which will place a long term burden on the Parish Meeting.

### **Financial Implications**

There is currently £14,400 unallocated within the Community Planning Implementation budget. If Members agree the above recommendations, a sum of £9,900 would be available within the Community Planning Implementation budget.

### **Corporate Priority Implications**

This project supports early delivery of Super-Fast Broadband to rural areas.  
(Focus One: Jobs)

### **Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications**

Providing access to information, recreation and services via quality superfast broadband provision reduces the need to travel which therefore reduces carbon emissions.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

The provision of high speed broadband will help improve access to services for all residents in this rural community.

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