

**Open Report on behalf of Peter Duxbury, Executive Director, Adults Services and Children's**

Report to:	<b>Lincolnshire Schools' Forum</b>
Date:	<b>27 April 2011</b>
Subject:	<b>Future for Digital Connectivity Across Lincolnshire</b>

**Summary:**

To consider replacement service contracts for schools for digital connectivity across Lincolnshire.

**Recommendation(s):**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**Background**

The County Council has two existing contracts which provide ICT connectivity for corporate services and schools as follows:-

- Contracts procured on behalf of schools through East Midlands Broadband Consortium (EMBC) for the provision of broadband connectivity and services.
- A contract with BT procured through an ADIT North framework for the provision of the corporate wide area network.

Both contracts expire in 2012 and cannot be extended. These contracts have a combined value of £4.7m per annum. Replacement service contracts need to be procured before expiry to ensure service continuity.

This requirement is also set in the context of a third initiative to develop a digital strategy for the County which aims to achieve: the best possible Next Generation Broadband access across the County, elimination of slow spots and not spots, business growth and diversification driven by ICT use, facilitation of flexible working, skills development and social inclusion. The digital strategy is forming the basis of a BDUK bid to access a proportion of the £350m allocated to this aim by Central Government.

**Public Sector Networks**

The move within the public sector is now towards the establishment of Public Sector Networks (PSNs). A feasibility report commissioned by the Lincolnshire

Public Sector Network Project Board has identified that significant value for money can be achieved by jointly procuring new service contracts in partnership with other Lincolnshire public sector agencies, including the 7 District Councils, University of Lincoln, Lincolnshire Police and NHS Lincolnshire. The same feasibility report also concludes that these new service contracts, if invested with BT, would also be an enabler for offering opportunities to improve digital / broadband connectivity for poorly served businesses and communities.

In response to the move towards PSNs; EMBC has been considering how to widen the scope of its own activities beyond to become the provider of a PSN within the East Midlands region. Lincolnshire County Council a member of EMBC has been fully involved with this work which has involved two elements:-

- Changing the governance arrangements of EMBC to enable a wider group of bodies to become involved with the company and to permit a wider trading role; and
- Structuring a procurement for a replacement contract to take full advantage of the opportunities for widening the availability of the solution to the public sector generally.

The proposal is that the new East Midlands PSN (EM-PSN) would procure and manage a core network and provide services to schools, public bodies and enable and support rural broadband initiatives.

### **Future Strategy for Broadband**

The County Council currently has two separate contracts for two separate networks as well as aspirations around facilitating the provision of broadband for communities and businesses. It makes sense for the Council to seek to bring these requirements together and to procure one contract capable of providing them all where this is possible. This is preferable to continuing to run two networks as it will remove current areas of duplication and deliver improved value for money through aggregation.

There are essentially two different routes to achieve best value for Schools, the Community and the County Council in terms of broadband provision.

1. Procure a PSN (either regionally or countywide) and use infrastructure as part of wider programme to improve broadband provision to communities
2. Seek a private sector, gap funded model for Next Generation Broadband (NGB) for schools, business and community benefit, running in parallel to a separate PSN procurement (either regionally or countywide)

In order to make an informed choice The County Council is in the process of commissioning a study to examine the advantages of both approaches. The study report will include a full range of options enabling LCC to take a broad view of achieving PSN / NGB in Lincolnshire over a maximum 5 year period, confirming the viability and practicality of all options. LCC's objective is to procure an infrastructure for Lincolnshire which:

- Enables LCC to have broadband connectivity and related services for the delivery of its services
- Enables LCC to facilitate schools to have access to broadband and national education network connectivity, and related services
- Enables LCC to maximise community access to broadband connectivity
- Enables LCC partners to have access to an accredited PSN if they wish.

Anticipated outcomes from this infrastructure include:

- Improved delivery of public services.
- Greater digital inclusion.
- Increased trade and investment.
- Reduced duplication and lower costs.

The final report is to be submitted to the Council by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2011.

### **Regional Initiative**

Whilst a final decision is yet to be reached around the optimum investment solution for Lincolnshire the regional initiative has by necessity had to continue to meet the 2012 contract deadline. EM-PSN and ESPO have already started procurement under Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) framework to procure an East Midlands Public Sector Network. The length of the infrastructure contract is proposed as 7 years with a possible extension to 10. The services framework (Lot 2) would be for four years. Lincolnshire County Council together with all other EMBC local authorities are fully represented in this process and have agreed, under existing contractual commitments to contribute a total of £500,000 to an investment fund which will fund the procurement. The Council contribution is £115,000 (already funded). The proposed contract is likely to be split into individual lots to provide the following:

- Lot 1: A core network infrastructure for the region providing connectivity to public services including tertiary education.
- Lot 1b: The connection of suitable county or private networks to the EM-PSN to receive accredited public service connections.
- Lot 1c: A framework to provide purchase of individual tail circuits to connect to the core PSN network infrastructure.
- Lot 2: A framework to provide a catalogue of educational and other ICT services directly to schools in the region.

The County Council, faces a 'one-in-a-decade' opportunity to improve the digital connectivity for all citizens of the County which in turn will bring considerable benefits to education, business growth and improve the lives of all citizens. The choices faced are complex and difficult. In order to make the most of the limited funding we collectively have, any future investment must be informed and carefully considered. Lincolnshire Schools and the Schools Forum are key stake holders in

this enterprise. This briefing paper serves to raise awareness of an emerging situation with regard to digital connectivity in the County and to prepare the schools community for stake holder engagement in the future.

**Conclusion**

**Consultation**

**a) Policy Proofing Actions Required**

n/a

**Appendices**

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	n/a

**Background Papers**

The following background papers as defined in the Local Government Act 1972 were relied upon in the writing of this report.

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
n/a	

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