

Digital Briefing for Farndon Ward via Teams, 17th January 2022.

Present

CW&C Cllr Paul Roberts,
Representatives of Parish Councils from Farndon Ward
Mike Dugine (MD) CW&C Digital Specialist

Purpose of meeting: Digital Update for Farndon Ward - Broadband

Mike Dugine explained he is the CW&C broadband development lead, a role he previously held for 2 years at Wrexham and Flintshire.

He confirmed that the Farndon Ward is a priority area for him to bring about better connectivity, he explained that he is working with Connecting Cheshire and Airband who have a two-year contract to increase connectivity into areas not covered by Openreach.

Types of Broadband

Super-Fast – Known as FTTC (Fibre to the Cabinet) where fibre optic cables are laid to the exchanges, properties should get between 24-300mb.

Ultra-Fast – Should produce 300 to 1000mb and is fibre to the property (FTTP). It was noted that there are other technologies which can produce ultrafast broadband, but these tend only to be viable where you have high concentration on properties/users e.g., central London and these do not currently offer a solution for rural areas.

Gigabit – 1000mb per second, which it was noted is not needed by residential properties, but its provision will future proof the infrastructure for the next 15 to 20 years.

It was noted that the priority is to get 'descent' connectivity to rural properties which do not already have a minimum of 24mb.

It was noted that schemes are now moving away from FTTC.

It was noted that 4926 dwellings in CW&C are not current covered by a plan to provide 24mb connectivity, this equates to:

Tattenhall Ward 16.9% of which Airband will address 9%

Malpas Ward 15.8% of which Airband will address 11%

Farndon Ward 13.6% of which Airband will address 2.3%

MD stated that there was a need to change the mindset of those delivering these schemes and to break areas into smaller projects as this works better.

There was also a need to look for short term solutions which can be revisited every 6 or 12 months as more infrastructure is installed and as technology is advancing.

4G

It was noted that 4G may provide a short-term solution on some areas.

MD confirmed that a grant scheme is being investigated where residents could obtain a grant of £800 to have 4G installed by a qualified professional company which it is hoped will be in place in the new financial year.

It was noted that 4G provision is completely different from mobile signals, meaning while you may not be able to get a mobile signal through a provider, they may be the best provider of 4G to your property, and this needed to be professionally assessed.

MD is looking to create a portfolio of companies who can provide this service.

A question was raised regarding 4G providing insufficient bandwidth during times of peak usage. It was confirmed this shouldn't be an issue and it is important 4G systems have a properly installed external antenna and that topography and geography are important factors. It was noted that 4G can fluctuate quite a bit.

CW&C are looking at providing vouchers for installation on gigabit connectivity and increasing the current voucher value of £1500 to £3000, it is hoped this will be signed off at the end of March.

It was noted there is a need for 10 properties to sign up to make most schemes viable, however if there are areas with less than 10 properties this should be discussed with MD. It was noted it was possible to cluster schemes as well as look at alternative solutions.

Universal Service Obligations

It was noted MD had had one success under this scheme and it was always worth a try but was extremely difficult to be successful.

Mobile Services

It was confirmed that improving mobile services is very difficult as installing transmitters and antenna are extremely expensive and providers expect them to be commercially viable.

One solution may be the Shared Rural Network.

It was reported that the emergency services network is becoming obsolete and is moving to 4G which is resulting in new infrastructure being installed and that space is being made on this infrastructure for commercial companies and this is something which can be discussed in CW&C. However, it was emphasised this is a slow process.

Next Steps

Cllr Roberts confirmed it would be helpful to have a list of areas/properties which do not have decent broadband.

It was confirmed it is essential to get residents to sign up the schemes.

MD confirmed he is happy to meet with Councils/residents to discuss this further in more detail.

It was suggested in some areas door knocking may be the only way to get residents to act.

Cllr Roberts thanked all for attending the meeting particularly Mike Dugine.

Ann Wright
18th January 2022.