SUBJECT:	DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE ACTION PLAN
MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	4TH SEPTEMBER 2019
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1.   PURPOSE:

To consider the approval of the draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (Appendix A).

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1   For Cabinet to approve the attached Digital Infrastructure Action Plan and in doing so to also approve the following recommendations i.e. that the Council will:

1. Take a policy position to proactively encourage broadband providers to install full fibre broadband infrastructure in the County;
2. Establish a Strategic Broadband Working Group to ensure a proactive approach is taken in ensuring all necessary internal Council processes are expedited to enable broadband providers to move at speed;.
3. Consider commercial loans to companies wishing to progress digital infrastructure projects within the county that will address digital deprivation issues; and
4. Fully consider any opportunities to engage with funding opportunities to install 5G and LoRaWAN infrastructure within the County where there is a basis of evidence of need, opening up the County as a regional testbed and pathfinder for the variety of applications likely to be developed as a result.

3.   KEY ISSUES:

3.1   Monmouthshire County Council and Monmouthshire's residents feel that the delivery of the Superfast Cymru programme in Monmouthshire has not been seen as a priority area for Welsh Government and BT. This is due to the sparsity of the population, the rurality of the landscape, the difficulty of the topography and subsequently the limited commercial viability of the county's deep rural areas.

3.2   The current situational analysis of Superfast Broadband Next Generation Access (NGA) coverage in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), undertaken prior to the Superfast Cymru Phase 2 (SFC2) Procurement, paints a stark picture. Monmouthshire has a distinct lack of coverage when compared with the other nine Local Authority partners in the CCR, as detailed in Table One that follows. Currently digital deprivation rates stand at 12.5% (approximately 8,000 premises) in Monmouthshire, in comparison to 3-4% in other CCR local authority areas. The current data is based on an Open Market Review exercise undertaken by Welsh Government in 2017, to inform the SFC2 procurement. However figures may change following the current Open Market Review which will complete in August 2019, when the market will be in a position to respond to more accurate and up to date information.

3.3   One of the core strategic objectives of the Council is 'Supporting enterprise, entrepreneurship and job creation'. The Council wishes to capitalise on the provision of a high speed, first class digital infrastructure, in order to deliver economic growth, wealth

creation and increased productivity and GVA for the county and the country. In addition, the Council's own Digital Strategy recognises that the digital landscape is constantly changing, customers are becoming more digitally savvy and there is therefore a need to make digital access to services easy so staff can free up time to release cashable savings. However without a robust digital infrastructure in place, progress in achieving these ambitions will be slow. This is a frustration, given the importance of public service delivery in a challenging rural environment, already struggling with poor public transport and the resultant higher proportionate costs of delivering services e.g. social care.

3.4 When comparing the ambition of the Council, the current NGA coverage and the anecdotal evidence received by Officers and Members alike, the following concerns can be drawn:

- Evidence of digital businesses struggling to deliver a high quality service due to poor connectivity;

- Evidence of home owners struggling to sell their homes due to poor connectivity;

- Evidence of students being unable to undertake their studies effectively due to poor connectivity;

- Delays in digitisation of council services due to capability of current connectivity and limited access available leading to increasing service costs at a time of austerity.

Table One: NGA coverage in the Cardiff Capital Region

Local Authority	NGA Coverage	% NGA White	NGA White Premises
BLAENAU GWENT	96.7%	3.26%	1,175
BRIDGEND	95.6%	4.41%	3,002
CAERPHILLY	95.2%	4.76%	4,002
CARDIFF	98.9%	1.14%	1,935
MERTHYR TYDFIL	96.8%	3.17%	925
MONMOUTHSHIRE	87.4%	12.56%	5,898
NEWPORT	98.0%	2.00%	1,480
RHONDDA CYNON TAFF	96.4%	3.58%	4,252
TORFAEN	96.4%	3.61%	1,615
VALE OF GLAMORGAN	96.1%	3.95%	2,453
TOTAL	**96.4%**	**3.64%**	**26,737**

3.5 In addition to local concerns the lack of NGA coverage also highlights wider strategic concerns:

- Monmouthshire is **strategically located** within the CCR as a key gateway into Wales from the economic power engines of the South West and the West Midlands accessed via the Severn Bridge, the M4 and the A40/A449;

- The **SFC2 programme was delayed** resulting in the NGA infrastructure delivery having ceased in Monmouthshire in December 2017 and not recommencing until early 2019. Although the tender for the 'Monmouthshire lot' has now been awarded to BT, intervention will be limited to circa 1600 properties. Therefore any improvement on the NGA coverage via SFC2 during 2019/2020 will be minimal and any likely improvements in the county will be within our conurbations, leaving deep rural areas in the same situation faced today.

- **Rural Community Development Funding** (RCDF) previously used by the RDP team to draw in funds for Broadband pilots such as TV Whitespace has now been **withdrawn** from WG and the money diverted for environmental projects. Therefore the team currently have no access to broadband infrastructure funds;

- The current **CCR digital objectives are ambitious** and **Monmouthshire's digital deprivation could thwart their ambitions** which are:

  - To ensure that the CCRCD citizens and businesses have access to world class digital infrastructure to facilitate Social inclusion, Economic development and inward investment through:

    - The creation of extensive Full Fibre Infrastructure across region;

    - Global connectivity - access to international fibre links to drive inward investment from key sectors such as media and finance;

    - Welsh Connectivity - Exploitation of the Cardiff Internet Exchange (IX) and wider connectivity;

    - Community Broadband – Settlement and Individual Property Connectivity;

    - Regional and Community Wi-Fi;

    - Mobile 5G access - Pilot specific locations for 5G, establish PoC and Scale-Up;

    - Sensing the CCRD - Providing a constellation of sensors to provide Smart City information resources;

    - Open Data - Develop a fully Open Data environment

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 The Assessment (Appendix B) demonstrates that the detail contained in the draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Table Two in the attached Draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (Appendix A) details an analysis of current strategic opportunities, impacts, resource requirements and risks to the Council.

5.2 In summary these can be assessed as follows:

- The Local Full Fibre Network funding which has already been approved could benefit 46 anchor sites across the county and upgrade 32 sites to 1gig capability and therefore provide the potential to run spurs to approximately 20% of the 12.56% unconnected premises utilising the Gigabit Voucher Scheme;

- The Trunk Road concession option has an ability to connect communities off the A465; A449/A40 and M4 – addressing approximately a further 20% of the 12.56% unconnected premises;

- Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme - £200M funding pot from DCMS to adopt a new "outside-in" approach trialling models for local hubs in rural areas, starting with primary schools, alongside a voucher scheme for funding full fibre connectivity to nearby premises, providing full fibre connectivity to homes and businesses. Council Officers are currently awaiting information regarding application process and next steps.

- Rural Connected Communities - DCMS is currently designing a new Rural Connected Communities (RCC) project, with the aim of building the business case for rural mobile connectivity (including 5G) by:
  o Identifying and testing demand-led coverage models;
  o Testing a range of innovative technical solutions and commercial approaches; and
  o Building and proving demand through new 5G use cases.

  Council Officers are awaiting further information regarding the application process.

- Commercial Loans to alternative broadband providers or 'Alt.nets' – BT's involvement in the roll out of further broadband infrastructure in the County other than SFC2 is likely to be minimal. Therefore as the commercial viability of broadband infrastructure is more limited than in an urban environment, due to reduced take up rates and more complex civil engineering requirements to install the infrastructure, it is likely that the Council will be approached for commercial loans to provide seed corn funding for the installation programmes.

5.3 The current opportunities available as detailed above, provide options however not all of them are certain. A policy position is therefore required to enable the Council to move at speed to maximise chances of success as they become available.

6. REASONS

6.1 The current digital deprivation rate of 12.5% in Monmouthshire is unacceptable, it puts our communities, businesses and indeed Wales at a severe disadvantage, particularly given Monmouthshire's proximity to the economic powerhouses of the South West, Gloucestershire and Herefordshire. Therefore there is a strategic imperative to ensure that Monmouthshire has sufficient NGA connectivity to maximise our economic growth and wealth creation capability, and increase our productivity in order to increase the GVA for the county and the country.

6.2 The analysis contained within the Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (Appendix A) provides clear and substantiated recommendations which are summarised as follows:

I. The Council will take a policy position to proactively encourage BT and Alt.nets to install broadband infrastructure in the County. Ideally this will be a full fibre to the premise solution however where this is not commercially viable then alternative

solutions such as wireless will be encouraged. A degree of proportionality between speed and 'want' will need to be considered, which balances the necessity for a business requiring 1Gb connectivity to run their operating systems as opposed to the needs of a rural home or home business where a reduced speed of say 30Mb will be sufficient.Other considerations will include the environmental impact of the deployment of the infrastructure in a county bordered by a national park and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Favoured solutions will be those that avoid expensive, disruptive, carbon generating civil engineering works.

II. This policy position would align with the CCR's City Deal Digital Objectives to 'create an extensive Full Fibre Infrastructure across the region' and the UK Government's Future Telecoms Review which promotes 'a full-fibre and 5G future for the UK' and 'recognises the need for both public sector and commercial investment, to deliver the new full-fibre networks that the UK requires to grow and compete in the global digital economy'.

III. The Council will establish a Strategic Broadband Working Group to ensure a proactive approach is taken in ensuring all necessary internal Council processes are expedited to enable broadband providers to move at speed.

IV. Through its' Investment Committee, the Council will consider commercial loans to companies wishing to progress digital infrastructure projects within the county that will address digital deprivation issues.

V. The Council will fully consider any opportunities to engage with funding opportunities to install 5G and LoRaWAN infrastructure within the County, opening up the County as a regional testbed and pathfinder for this emerging cellular network and the variety of applications likely to be developed as a result. However, a conscious note will be made of any changes to legislation regarding any potential health impacts.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The full capital resource implications are as yet unknown as the digital infrastructure interventions required will be different for each community or in fact some individual premises. Further update reports will therefore be presented to Economy and Development Select Committee or to the Council's Investment Committee as opportunities arise.

8. CONSULTEES

- Monmouthshire communities as evidenced in Appendix A of the Digital Infrastructure Action Plan (Appendix A)
- Senior Leadership Team
- Economy and Development Select Committee – 10th April 2019. Full minutes from the meeting can be found here however conclusions drawn from the meeting are detailed here as follows:
  o It is clear that Monmouthshire is lagging behind with regard to Superfast Cymru broadband provision;
  o There is an issue of deprivation within the County;
  o It is critical for our economic future and the broadband provision gap needs to be closed as quickly as possible;
  o Monmouthshire needs to be enabled. Superfast Cymru 2 is not going to realise remaining capacity. Therefore other options need to be investigated. Monmouthshire County Council needs to be an enabler to provide this service.
  o The need for a dedicated staff resource has been identified to bring this to fruition.

The Committee resolved to support the draft Digital Deprivation Action Plan (now updated and renamed the 'Digital Infrastructure Action Plan') and recommended that the report be presented to Cabinet for adoption.

9.   BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix A: Draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan
Appendix B: Future Generations Evaluation

10.   AUTHOR:
Cath Fallon, Head of Enterprise and Community Animation

11.   CONTACT DETAILS: E-mail: cathfallon@monmouthshire.gov.uk   Mob: 07557 190969

Appendix B

Future Generations Evaluation
(includes Equalities and Sustainability Impact

Name of the Officer Cath Fallon **Phone no:07557 190969** **E-mail: cathfallon@monmouthshire.gov.uk**	**Draft Digital Infrastructure Action Plan**
Name of Service: Enterprise	**Date: Future Generations Evaluation** 15th August 2019

NB. Key strategies and documents that may help you identify your contribution to the wellbeing goals and sustainable development principles include: Single Integrated Plan, Continuance Agreement, Improvement Plan, Local Development Plan, People Strategy, Asset Management Plan, Green Infrastructure SPG, Welsh Language Standards, etc.

1. **Does your proposal deliver any of the well-being goals below?**

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A prosperous Wales Efficient use of resources, skilled, educated people, generates wealth, provides jobs	Improved broadband infrastructure improves opportunities for education and training via access to on line resources, universities and training courses.	There is a strategic imperative to ensure that Monmouthshire has sufficient NGA connectivity to maximise our economic growth and wealth creation capability, and increase our productivity in order to increase the GVA for the county and the country.

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A resilient Wales Maintain and enhance biodiversity and ecosystems that support resilience and can adapt to change (e.g. climate change)	Improved broadband infrastructure can raise awareness of biodiversity and climate change issues and encourage positive participation.	Improved broadband infrastructure can also enable citizens to work from home thus reducing carbon emissions.
A healthier Wales People's physical and mental wellbeing is maximized and health impacts are understood	Given the move towards tele health care improvements to digital infrastructure presents opportunities for digital healthcare delivery and helps raises awareness of the benefits of physical activity.	Improved digital infrastructure can provide the opportunity to raise awareness of the benefits of physical activity, classes for which can be delivered direct to citizen's homes via the Internet.
A Wales of cohesive communities Communities are attractive, viable, safe and well connected	Improved broadband access is proven to reduce social isolation and promote independence.	Improved broadband infrastructure is also proven to encourage wider participation in community and voluntary work.
A globally responsible Wales Taking account of impact on global well-being when considering local social, economic and environmental wellbeing	Improved broadband access can raise awareness of these issues and promote positive activity.	
A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language Culture, heritage and Welsh language are promoted and protected. People are encouraged to do sport, art and recreation	Improved broadband access can raise awareness of culture, heritage and the welsh language and encourage positive participation.	

Well Being Goal	Does the proposal contribute to this goal? Describe the positive and negative impacts.	What actions have been/will be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
A more equal Wales People can fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances	Improved broadband access can enable access to on line learning resources to enable them to fulfill their potential, whatever their background.	

2. How has your proposal embedded and prioritised the sustainable governance principles in its development?

Sustainable Development Principle		Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Long Term	Balancing short term need with long term and planning for the future	The technologies deployed in some circumstances will provide a short term fix e.g. wireless until a longer term solution e.g. Fibre to the Premise can be deployed.	Improved broadband access will ensure that Monmouthshire citizens are able to embrace future technologies and opportunities.
Collaboration	Working together with other partners to deliver objectives	A partnership approach will be undertaken to ensure the best solution for communities can be found. This is likely to be with Welsh Government and a range of private sector network providers.	
Involvement	Involving those with an interest and seeking their views	Citizens are invited to get involved by participating in local meetings with potential broadband providers or by contacting Monmouthshire Enterprise directly.	Further information can be found here: http://monmouthshire.biz/digital-monmouthshire/for-residents/

Sustainable Development Principle	Does your proposal demonstrate you have met this principle? If yes, describe how. If not explain why.	Are there any additional actions to be taken to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Putting resources into preventing problems occurring or getting worse	A situational analysis of Superfast Broadband Next Generation Access (NGA) coverage in the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR), based on the OMR/SAPC undertaken prior to the Superfast Cymru Phase 2 (SFC2) Procurement has been undertaken. This paints a stark picture in terms of the current lack of coverage in Monmouthshire, in comparison to our other nine Local Authority partner.	Additional resources will be deployed to produce a dynamic model indicating current proposed interventions, timescales and premises targeted, leaving those requiring further interventions. Following receipt of the model, potential solutions can be costed and brought forward to the Council's Investment Committee for consideration.
Considering impact on all wellbeing goals together and on other bodies	Access to broadband can reduce carbon emissions, rural isolation and rural poverty. It can also provide access to learning which can increase skills and subsequently wealth and overall well-being.	

3. **Are your proposals going to affect any people or groups of people with protected characteristics?** Please explain the impact, the evidence you have used and any action you are taking below. For more detailed information on the protected characteristics, the Equality Act 2010 and the Welsh Language Standards that apply to Monmouthshire Council please follow this link:http://hub/corporatedocs/Equalities/Forms/AllItems.aspx or contact Alan Burkitt on 01633 644010 or alanburkitt@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Age	Improved broadband access reduces the barriers to access for people with protected characteristics.	Any negative impacts can be reduced if suitable safeguarding strategies are put in place.	Affordable and accessible broadband solutions will be identified to maximize opportunities for all.

Protected Characteristics	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on the protected characteristic	What has been/will be done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Disability	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above. In addition, the proposals will take the needs of the disabled population into consideration during the development phase.
Gender reassignment	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Marriage or civil partnership	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Pregnancy or maternity	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Race	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Religion or Belief	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Sex	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Sexual Orientation	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	As per Age Line Above
Welsh Language	As per Age Line Above	As per Age Line above	In addition, all signage will be compliant with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 as specified in the Standards applied to Monmouthshire

4. **Council has agreed the need to consider the impact its decisions has on important responsibilities of Corporate Parenting and safeguarding. Are your proposals going to affect either of these responsibilities?** For more information please see the guidance

	Describe any positive impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	Describe any negative impacts your proposal has on safeguarding and corporate parenting	What will you do/ have you done to mitigate any negative impacts or better contribute to positive impacts?
Safeguarding	*During the delivery of the programme of activities, safeguarding will be at the forefront to ensure that any future service delivery promotes the well-being of children and vulnerable adults, preventing them from being harmed and protecting those who are at risk of abuse and neglect.*	As above	As above
Corporate Parenting	*During the delivery of this programme of activities the needs of any 'looked after' children will be considered to ensure any future service delivery protects their welfare.*	As above	As above

5. What evidence and data has informed the development of your proposal?

The Caldicot Vision document (February 2018) and various stakeholder engagement activities. In addition the CCR Regeneration Plan has been founded upon the following:

• The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act;
• The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act;
• Prosperity for All;
• Growth & Competitiveness Commission Report Review and Recommendations Page 22;
• Cardiff Capital Region "Powering the Welsh Economy";
• Equality Act 2010; and
• Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

6. SUMMARY: As a result of completing this form, what are the main positive and negative impacts of your proposal, how have they informed/changed the development of the proposal so far and what will you be doing in future?

The Assessment demonstrates that the detail contained in the draft Digital Deprivation Action Plan demonstrates compliance with the well-being five ways of working, supports the well-being goals and associated activities are expected to have a positive impact on all groups and people with protected characteristics.

7. **ACTIONS: As a result of completing this form are there any further actions you will be undertaking? Please detail them below, if applicable.**

What are you going to do	When are you going to do it?	Who is responsible	Progress

8. **MONITORING: The impacts of this proposal will need to be monitored and reviewed. Please specify the date at which you will evaluate the impact, and where you will report the results of the review.**

The impacts of this proposal will be evaluated on:	Six monthly via Economy and Development Select Committee

9. **VERSION CONTROL: The Future Generations Evaluation should be used at the earliest stages of decision making, and then honed and refined throughout the decision making process. It is important to keep a record of this process so that we can demonstrate how we have considered and built in sustainable development wherever possible.**

Version No.	Decision making stage	Date considered	Brief description of any amendments made following consideration
1	Scrutiny – Economy and Development Select Committee	10th April 2019	Action Plan reviewed, updated and renamed Digital Infrastructure Action Plan
2	Cabinet	4th September 2019	