

MINUTES of a meeting of the **IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - RESOURCES** held on 7 March 2013 at County Hall, Matlock.

PRESENT

Councillor P Murray (in the Chair)

Councillors G K Hickton, G J E MacDonald, P Makin, D Stone, Mrs J A Twigg, G D Wharmby, D J Wilcox and D Wilson

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Gillott, Mrs C Pidgeon, R W Russell and J G Williams.

05/13 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 January 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

06/13 **DIGITAL DERBYSHIRE** Mr F Horsley, Head of Economic Regeneration, attended the meeting to make a presentation on the progress made on the Digital Derbyshire project.

BDUK was the Government agency within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport responsible for managing the overall programme. BDUK awarded Derbyshire County Council a grant of £7.39 m, subject to a matching amount being found locally and approval of the Digital Derbyshire Local Broadband Plan. The County Council had approved a one-off contribution of £1.056m and agreed to underwrite the remaining balance of £6.334m to secure the Government grant. In May 2012, BDUK approved the Derbyshire Local Broadband Plan, including the proposed delivery timetable.

Despite delays nationally with the National Procurement Framework and EU state aid approval, the “Digital Derbyshire” project had continued to progress with activity focusing on progressing procurement with an approved supplier through the National Framework, demand stimulation activity with local businesses and communities and seeking external funding to offset the public sector match.

In January 2013, the County Council was given approval to commence with the formal 30 week procurement process with formal approval to award the contract to the successful supplier being in August 2013.

In recognition of the complexity and scale of the project and investment involved, a formal Project Board was in place to manage the process with the Deputy Chief Executive as Chair. The project is resourced by the Broadband Project Manager (Natalie Ward) and Broadband Project Support Officer (Elise Higgins).

Efforts continued to be made to offset the public sector match funding required that had been underwritten by the County Council. The main focus had been on seeking European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support for the project. The Council had worked alongside other county authorities and East Midlands Councils to make the case for an amendment to the programme to allow such investment. This had been accepted by National Government and CLG had submitted the amendment to the European Commission for approval and a positive response was expected.

In the meantime, the County Council had submitted a full project application for ERDF funding that was being appraised. If successful, the project would offset the County Council funding underwritten by £2.5m. Discussions continued with district and borough councils regarding potential capital contributions to the project.

The justification for County Council funding for “Digital Derbyshire” remained convincing in responding to the government’s digital agenda and transforming the way in which the Council transact, communicate and deliver services to residents. In essence, the project should be considered as an “invest to save” initiative as the initial capital cost should be offset by significant future budget savings.

The Chairman thanked Mr Horsley for his update and for the progress that had been made to date.

07/13 WORK PROGRAMME The Chairman wished to place on record his appreciation of the contribution of Members and officers to the work undertaken by the Committee and its working groups.

RESOLVED to receive the report on the progress on the Committee’s work programme for 2012/2013.