

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 26 February 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Motion on Notice – Broadband in East Devon

Report summary:

The constitution provides that members of Council may submit written notice of motions for debate at Council. A motion must be signed by the proposer and seconder and at least 3 members and submitted not later than 10 clear days before the date of the meeting.

Motions must be about matters for which the council has a responsibility, or which affect East Devon District Council and will be listed on the agenda in the order in which notice received.

Motions for which notice has been given will be listed on the agenda in the order in which notice was received unless the member giving notice states, in writing, that they propose to move it to a later meeting or withdraw it.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That the Motion on Notice – Broadband in East Devon is debated and determined by Council.

Reason for recommendation:

The constitution makes provision for motions on notice to be debated and decided by Council.

Officer: Andrew Melhuish, Corporate Lead Democratic Services & Scrutiny

(andrew.melhuish@eastdevon.gov.uk)

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

The impact is low as this report is dealing with the submission of motions on notice. Any work undertaken following the consideration of the motion on notice would be subject to an equalities impact assessment being undertaken.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; A risk assessment would need to be completed on any works or further investigations resulting from the motions of notice.

Links to background information N/A

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

Report in full

Motion 1: Broadband in East Devon

Proposer: Councillor Richard Jefferies

Secunder: Councillor Paul Hayward

The motion has been supported by Councillors Yehudi Levine, Cllr Duncan Mackinder, Cllr Todd Olive

Motion Received: 12 February 2025

East Devon District Council,

- A. Noting with concern issues raised by residents across East Devon regarding slow and unreliable broadband connections¹, and that some residents have been driven by poor service into arranging their own fibre optic connections²,
- B. Recognising the critical importance of broadband for accessing everyday services like emails and news outlets, using online banking and shopping facilities, and engaging with digital government services like passport applications, reporting missed bin collections or environmental health issues, or accessing pensions and benefits,
- C. Emphasising the value of decent broadband for wellbeing, including benefits for social connectivity and inclusion,³
- D. Highlighting the role of fast broadband speeds as an enabler of local economic growth³, driving productivity improvements and enabling residents of rural areas to work remotely, while also unlocking rural premises as a venue for digital businesses,
- E. Noting Devon County Council's leaving over half of premises promised new connections under the rural connectivity scheme un-covered following a decision to 'let off' broadband supplier Airband from its obligations under a 2020 contract⁴, and
- F. Recalling that this follows an appalling 2024 decision by its political leadership to divert over £7m in funding for rural broadband upgrades returned by BT to help plug its general budget

¹ cf. Midweek Herald (2023): *MP calls for Govt to tackle Devon's broadband 'not-spots'* [22 Dec]. Available at: <https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/news/24007547.mp-calls-govt-tackle-devons-broadband-not-spots/>

² cf. Daily Express (2024): *'We got quoted £115,000 to have broadband connected' - Inside Britain's internet nightmare* [18 Mar]. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1878711/Village-broadband-Devon-Michelle-Donelan>

³ cf. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (2018): *Evaluation of the Economic Impact and Public Value of the Superfast Broadband Programme*. Available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b7a7cc640f0b6433bf8e954/Superfast_Integrated_Report.pdf

⁴ Devon County Council (2024): *Airband's full fibre broadband delivery for CDS scaled back* [31 Oct]. Available at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/airbands-full-fibre-broadband-delivery-for-cds-scaled-back/>

deficit, rather than investing further in rural connectivity as sought by government and generally done by councils elsewhere⁵:

1. Requests that the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets:
 - a. Write to all parish and town councils to canvass for evidence and experiences of poor connectivity in East Devon, and where feasible to seek the same from East Devon's many rural businesses, and
 - b. Write to the Minister for Telecoms and East Devon's MP's to re-iterate the issue of broadband 'not-spots' in our district, and ask what actions government are taking to alleviate this critical constraint on social wellbeing and economic growth; and
2. Asks that the Leader:
 - a. Invite other authorities in Devon to participate in a joint initiative - following the successful example of the Devon Water Summit⁶ - to explore the costs of poor connectivity in the region, and to invite relevant public and industry bodies to explore how superfast fibre rollouts can be further accelerated, and
 - b. Writes to the Leader at Devon County Council, and the Programme Director of Connecting Devon & Somerset, to express this Council's disappointment at the cancellation of over half of Airband's connection obligations, and to invite them to offer an urgent briefing to this Council regarding efforts to bring superfast broadband to all of our residents, including changes made to Connecting Devon & Somerset's due diligence processes to ensure that such failures do not happen in future.

Financial implications:

To be confirmed, subject to the outcome of the consideration on the Motion on Notice.

Legal implications:

The motions on notice have been submitted in accordance with the Part 4 of the Council's Constitution – Rules of Procedure 10.1 Notice: Except for motions which can be moved without notice under Rule 11, written notice of every motion, signed by at least 5 members, must be delivered to the Chief Executive not later than 10 clear days before the date of the meeting.

⁵ ISPreview (2024): *Devon UK Use BT Broadband Gainshare to Tackle Council Deficit* [15 Jan]. Available at:

<https://www.ispreview.co.uk/index.php/2024/01/devon-uk-use-bt-broadband-gainshare-to-tackle-council-deficit.html>

⁶ An initiative of this Council, bringing together Devon's local authorities with public and research bodies to make progress on reducing sewage spills throughout the region