

Report to: Council

Date of Meeting: 10 December 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document



## Broadband in East Devon

### Report summary:

Following a Council motion in February 2025, East Devon District Council ran a Rural Broadband Survey to gather evidence of poor connectivity across the district. The survey revealed widespread dissatisfaction with broadband speed, reliability, and infrastructure, particularly among the most rural businesses and communities. These findings will inform a letter to be written to the Telecoms Minister and East Devon's MPs, to reiterate the serious impacts of broadband 'not-spots' in the district.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

### Recommendation:

That Council:

1. Acknowledge the results of the Rural Broadband Survey.
2. Request the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Economy write to the Minister for Telecoms and East Devon's Members of Parliament to reiterate the serious impacts of broadband 'not-spots' in the district, factoring in members' feedback on the Survey.
3. Request the Leader to invite other local authorities, public and industry bodies in Devon to a joint initiative exploring how superfast fibre rollouts can be further accelerated.
4. Request the Leader write to the Leader at Devon County Council, Cabinet Member for Rural Affairs, and the Programme Director of Connecting Devon & Somerset, inviting them to offer an urgent briefing to this Council regarding efforts to bring superfast broadband to all our residents.

### Reason for recommendation:

By presenting the results of the Rural Broadband Survey 2025 back to Council, members have an opportunity to reflect on its findings and help feed into the Portfolio Holder's letter to the Telecoms Minister and East Devon's MPs.

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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

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; There are no immediate risks associated with the report, nor the process or outcomes of the survey.

**Links to background information** [Agenda for Council Wednesday, 26th February, 2025](#)

**Link to** [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
  - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
  - ☒ Resilient economy that supports local business
  - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
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## Report

### Background and Purpose

1.1 On 26 February 2025, East Devon District Council passed a motion (proposed by Cllr Richard Jefferies and seconded by Cllr Paul Hayward) in response to widespread concerns about poor broadband connectivity across the district.

1.2 The motion highlighted the critical role of broadband in enabling access to essential services, supporting wellbeing, and driving rural economic growth. It also expressed disappointment over the failure of delivery schemes—particularly the decision by Devon County Council to release Airband from its contractual obligations, leaving over half of promised connections unfulfilled.

1.3 As a result, the Council requested the Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets to:

- Canvass evidence from town and parish councils and rural businesses.
- Engage national government and MPs to advocate for action on broadband ‘not-spots’.

1.4 This led to the commissioning of the Rural Broadband Survey, designed to gather direct feedback from affected communities and inform future policy and advocacy.

### Survey Scope and Participation

1.5 The survey ran from 15 May to 6 June 2025, receiving:

- 62 responses from councils and representative organisations
- 48 responses from rural businesses

### Key Findings

1.6 The key findings of the survey are as follows:

- a) **Connectivity Issues:** Respondents reported extremely slow speeds (often <2 Mbps), frequent outages, poor mobile coverage, and lack of fibre infrastructure.
- b) **Broken Promises:** Many cited cancelled contracts (e.g. Airband, Gigaclear) and failed delivery by Connecting Devon & Somerset (CDS).
- c) **Economic and Social Impact:** Poor broadband is harming business viability, limiting remote work, reducing property values, increasing rural isolation and blocking growth.

- d) Demand for Action: There is strong support for full fibre rollout, improved oversight of delivery programmes, and government-backed investment.

## **Next Steps**

1.7 Following the results of the survey, the Portfolio Holder for Assets and Economy will write to the Minister for Telecoms and East Devon's Members of Parliament to reiterate the serious impacts of broadband 'not-spots' in the district.

1.8 The letter will urge government to provide a clear plan of action, including reforms to delivery programmes, increased accountability for contractors, and a renewed commitment to delivering full fibre infrastructure in rural areas. With rural digital exclusion continuing to hinder local growth and community sustainability, national intervention is urgently needed.

1.9 The results of the survey also enable further local action, based on the February 2025 Council motion. This would involve:

- Inviting other local authorities, public and industry bodies in Devon to a joint initiative exploring how superfast fibre rollouts can be further accelerated.
- Inviting Devon County Council and Connecting Devon & Somerset to offer an urgent briefing to this Council regarding efforts to bring superfast broadband to all our residents.

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## **Financial implications:**

There appears to be no direct financial implication from the recommendations in the report.

## **Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.

## **Appendix 1: Rural Broadband Consultation Summary Report**



Rural Broadband  
Consultation Summary