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To: West Sussex Parish Council Clerks

Dear Colleagues,

This letter is to let you know of the latest steps in our plans to make Superfast Broadband services accessible across the West Sussex. As you know we aim to do this using funds committed by the County Council, BDUK (Broadband Development UK, the government department responsible for the programme) together with that expected from the private sector.

Before we can do that the European Union have to agree that state aided funds can be used for the purpose of enabling private industry to achieve something for the public good. We understand that this permission to proceed will be given to BDUK this 'autumn'.

We have been also been unable so far to take the first step in assessing where to target the funding, which is to carry out an Open Market Review (OMR) with suppliers to map their current and future (up to three years') planned coverage of broadband services.

Regrettably this has been delayed by discussions taking place between the two suppliers signed up to the BDUK framework (BT Openreach and Fujitsu) and BDUK itself over the management of the process of contracting with all of those local authorities who have applied.

The suppliers themselves have expressed concern that not all of the 42 local authorities are ready to engage in pre-procurement activity and as a result of this BDUK introduced a new assurance process to ensure the readiness of each project.

We have been agitating BDUK to allow us to progress and last week were one of the first local authority projects to successfully complete the assurance process and have now been able to publish our OMR and send it to potential suppliers.

This is good news. It has allowed us to take a significant step forward and collect the information on which we will base a mapped assessment of the county showing where no superfast broadband services are currently available, or are planned for future investment by technology suppliers. We can then plot which

areas fall into scope for funding by the project as they require public sector investment to make it commercially viable for broadband network suppliers to build the infrastructure for superfast services.

Once we have completed the OMR we will then carry out consultation with suppliers and the wider public (residents, businesses, district, borough and parish councils) about the areas where we can legally apply the funding. This is to both to check back with suppliers that within our mapping we have drawn the right conclusions, and allow the public the opportunity to comment.

Suppliers have now made it clear to BDUK that in order to meet the increasingly challenging deadline of 2015 a number of concessions inevitably need to be made. They have requested that as far as possible local authorities keep contract negotiations short by agreeing upfront not to request prioritisation of geography, timing or premises for the technology to be rolled out to. BDUK has agreed to this, and so have we. However, it need not preclude us from putting forward our own prioritisation preferences to the selected supplier once they are engaged. Inevitably, though, this will mean some negotiation to find the most economical solution.

These activities will ultimately inform our Invitation to Tender (ITT) which we had hoped to publish before the end of the year. It's now apparent that as a result of the delays, we will do this early next year and aim to sign a contract with the preferred supplier in early summer 2013.

Our timescales may have slipped by a few months, but we are still on target to complete delivery of the project by the deadline of April 2015.

I hope you find this information useful to share with your colleagues.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lionel Barnard', written in a cursive style.

Lionel Barnard
Deputy Leader & portfolio for Communities, Environment & Enterprise

cc West Sussex District and Borough Leaders and Chief Executives