SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO:	Leader and Cabinet	9th June 2005
AUTHOR:	Finance and Resources Director	

CLOSURE OF BROADBAND PROJECT

Purpose

1. To provide an update on the deployment of broadband across the District.

2. To advise on the formal closure of the project.

Effect on Corporate Objectives

3.

Quality, Accessible Services	Access to broadband services to enable citizens to carry out their business with the council in an efficient manner. Easy access to information and council services.
Village Life	
Sustainability	Reduced travelling
Partnership	With Trilogy Telecom to ensure effective delivery of broadband services to the district in a cost effective manner.

Background

4. On 30th January 2003, Cabinet made the following resolutions:

   a) that the Council submit an application to EEDA for funding of a District-wide broadband service and take the leading role in the application;

   b) that further decisions regarding the project, including consideration of tenders in satisfaction of Standing Orders, be delegated to the Information and Customer Services Portfolio.

5. The application was developed by the Assistant Director (ICT), supported by Richard Jones of RDJ Consultants, and was submitted on 30th April 2003.

6. EEDA also received applications to the competition from the following communities within the District:

   - Cambridge Ring South East/Linton Broadband covering Babraham, Balsham, Bartlow, Castle Camps, Great Abington, Hadstock, Hildersham. Horseheath. Linton, Little Abington. Shudy Camps, West Wickham and West Wratting.

   - Virtual Cambridgeshire Communities Network covering Boxworth, Papworth Everard, Madingley, Lolworth, Elsworth, Connington and Hilton.

   - Broadband for Hinxton covering Hinxton.

   - The Mordens covering Steeple Morden, Guilden Morden and Odsey.

   - Papworth Broadband Action Group covering Papworth Everard.

- Surf Waterbeach covering Waterbeach, Landbeach and Cottenham.

- Over and District Broadband covering Over, Swavesey and Longstanton.

7. The Council's application was successful, and a grant of £300,000 was offered (compared with a requested sum of £339,000). This was announced by EEDA on 23rd July 2003.

8. After several presentations and discussions with prospective partners, Trilogy Telecom was selected as the preferred technology partner for the deployment of broadband services across the district in areas not immediately supported by the more conventional providers, BT and ntl.

9. The target for broadband coverage in the District is 99%.

10. A voucher scheme, to be administered by the council, was devised to assist residents in the acquisition of a broadband service, these being funded from the EEDA grant at a level which meant the installation and setup costs were effectively free.

11. The first connections to the sponsored broadband service via Trilogy were made in the Arrington, Steeple Morden, Crafts Hill, Swavesey and Willingham areas in July 2004.

Considerations

12. Technology improvements, most notably the [1]BT Extended Reach Trials, have increased the availability of broadband from the mainstream suppliers and reduced the demand made of the Trilogy service to a level where some exchanges and areas became unviable. As a direct result, Trilogy were released from their obligation to broadband enable the exchanges of Linton, Royston, Sawston and West Wratting.

13. Cambourne and the immediate area is still awaited, BT have indicated that this will be complete by August 2005 and in conjunction with the Trilogy service (now available to parts of Lower Cambourne) and the ntl service (available to a large part of Great Cambourne), will provide broadband services to all residents in the locality.

14. Through the rest of the district, connections continue to be made according to demand. Trilogy continues installing broadband services and make monthly claims against the grant. All claims are checked and verified.

15. However, BT continues to be the provider of choice. As the BT service has become more readily available, the demand for a Trilogy enabled service has decreased. Trilogy remain focussed on providing a quality service at bandwidth levels not available via BT.

16. The implication of the above is that the district now enjoys a greater than 99% (broad based) coverage for broadband services (**Appendix 1**), this figure being achieved well ahead of original expectations of the project.

17. The EEDA grant is substantially underspent and forecast for the continued deployment of broadband would indicate that the grant will remain underspent when the grant allocation period ends in 2006. EEDA are to be approached for consideration to extending the existing grant period for an additional 12 months, to terminate 2007.

18. Community Capacity Building initiatives are well underway, training for village representatives is ongoing and village websites are now appearing. Barton Parish Council (http://www.eastspace.net/barton/home.asp) and Castle Camps Village (http://www.eastspace.net/castlecamps/home.asp) are already making good use of the facility.

19. Other initiatives such as new business start-ups and new business attracted to the region are encouraged and regularly monitored.

20. Project management consultancy arrangements supporting the broadband project have been revised and will terminate July 2005. The Asst Director Finance & Resources (ICT) will continue to manage the project and the closure accordingly.

Options

21. None.

Financial Implications

22. Possible non-claim of grant monies awarded via EEDA, no direct effect on any SCDC Revenue or Capital monies.

Legal Implications

23. None.

Staffing Implications

24. None.

Risk Management Implications

25. None.

Consultations

26. The Finance and Resources Director
I&CS Portfolio Holder
RDJ Consultants
The Broadband Project Management Group
EEDA
Trilogy Telecom

Conclusions/Summary

27. Increased availability of broadband services from the mainstream providers and the Council's technology partner, Trilogy Telecom, has now provided access to broadband services to in excess of 99% of the South Cambridgeshire District.

28. Continued management at board level is no longer a requirement, the basic requirements and targets having been met.

29. Further management of the voucher scheme can be carried out by the Asst. Director Finance & Resources (ICT), update reports to be made available on a 6 monthly or exceptions basis until funding ceases.

Recommendations

30. To note the success of the broadband deployment.

31. To support the formal closure of the project and the proposed arrangements for the continuing management of the EEDA funding.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

SCDC application to the EEDA competition
Broadband Project Board Minutes – March 2005, May 2005.

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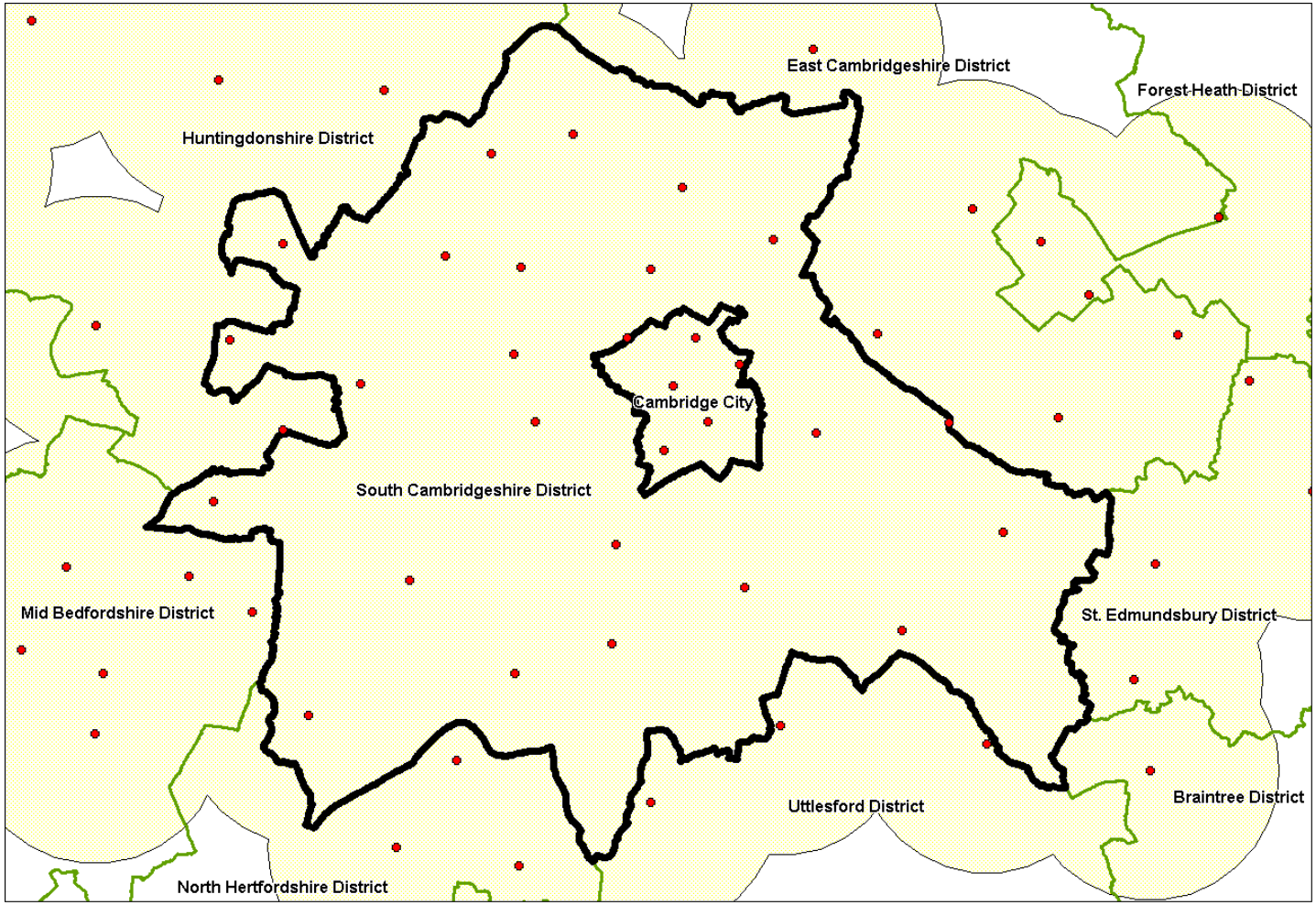
[1] BT 'Extended Reach Trials' - Following BT Wholesale trials in Milton Keynes and rural areas around Fort William and Dingwall in the Scottish Highlands, BT is confident a 512kb/sec ADSL service can now be provided to the vast majority of people beyond the former limit which was roughly equivalent to 6km distance from the exchange.

From September 6, 2004, the reach limit for the 512kb/s ADSL services will be removed. BT is also increasing the range for 1Mb/s premium services from 4km to approximately 6km - making 1Mb/s ADSL available to 96 per cent of homes and businesses connected to a broadband exchange.

The trial data indicates that removing the limit means 99.8 per cent of lines connected to a broadband exchange should now be able to get a 512kb/s ADSL service. To date approximately 96 per cent of homes and businesses connected to broadband enabled exchanges were within range for 512kb/s ADSL.

Broadband coverage for South Cambridgeshire District - 6km buffer per exchange



Key:

SCDC District Boundary

Site of telephone exchange

Coverage of 6km buffer