



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Introduction of new digital and broadband grant schemes across Gloucestershire

Dates between which decision will be taken	Earliest date: 15 December 2022 Latest date: 31 December 2022
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Leader of the Council
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	<p>To approve the introduction of a revised set of grant schemes intended to support households and certain business premises in Gloucestershire that do not have access to superfast broadband services.</p> <p>Given that Gloucestershire County Council has worked in partnership with Herefordshire Council throughout the duration of the Fastershire project to address the challenges of broadband availability across both counties, this report recommends that Gloucestershire County Council approves an approach that is consistent with Herefordshire Council's approach to awarding broadband grants.</p>

<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That the Leader of the Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approves an increase in the maximum financial threshold of the existing Fastershire Community Grant Scheme from £5,000 per premise to £7,000 per household premise with download speeds under 30Mbps during the period 1 January 2023 until 31 August 2023. 2. Approves the creation of a new Fastershire Business Grant scheme during the period 1 January 2023 until 31 August 2023 to support business premises with download speeds under 30Mbps. The maximum grant will be £20,000 per qualifying business premise where there is a 20% match funding contribution from the business. 3. Approves the creation of a new Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant scheme to support residential properties with download speeds under 30Mbps that are unable to apply for the Fastershire Community Grant. This new grant will support improved digital connectivity based on 4G technology by supplying and installing a 4G Directional Antenna and the external 4G router as described in Appendix A of this report. 4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure in consultation with the Leader of the Council to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conduct a competitive procurement process(es) in respect of a contract for the supply and installation of 4G Directional Antenna and external 4G routers. The proposed contract(s) shall continue initially for the period commencing on 1 April 2023 and expiring on 31 March 2025. Subject to demand and the council securing future funding, the term of this contract(s) may be extended, in which circumstance a separate decision shall be sought in line with the council's governance procedures. b) Award such a contract(s) to the preferred tenderer; and c) Implement a phased introduction of the proposed new Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant scheme described in Appendix A of this report. Phase 1 will include the 1,187 premises transferred out of Gigaclear contract's Lot 2/3c: south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire (west of the River Severn), pursuant to an Individual Cabinet Member Decision taken in December 2021. Phase 2 will open such scheme to any qualifying households across the county
<p>Reasons for recommendations</p>	<p>The approved Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019-22 is being delivered through a series of delivery stages, via a combination of contracts to network suppliers and bespoke community programmes.</p> <p>There have been several changes in Government policy that have impacted national delivery programmes and the Broadband industry which necessitate changes to the existing Fastershire delivery programme, including the introduction of a new Digital Household grant to support households still without access to Superfast Broadband. This report is pursuant to the Individual Cabinet Member Decision taken in December 2021.</p>

Resource Implications

Summary of proposed Fastershire Grants and Digital Household Grant

Name	Summary of eligibility criteria
Fastershire Community Grant Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties with download speeds under 30Mbps – designed for communities to come together – Cost threshold £7,000 per premise. Closing date for grant applications is 31 August 2023.
Fastershire Business Grant scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties with download speeds under 30Mbps – maximum grant of £20,000 per premise where there is a 20% match funding contribution from business. Closing date for grant applications is 31 August 2023.
Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Properties with download speeds under 30Mbps – designed for individual premises. Currently 5,699 premises would qualify for this grant. Phase 1 for priority premises in Forest of Dean. Phase 2 for any qualifying premises in county. See Appendix A for more information.

Within Gloucestershire the Fastershire project has £1.01m allocated for grant support in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This value may increase as part of the Borders Broadband Contract with BT the county council is entitled to a rebate payment based on the uptake of internet service users. This means we are expecting additional funding during 2022-23 which could be used to increase the size of the funding available to grant schemes. The financial value of the grants awarded will be kept under review and adjusted in line with Gloucestershire’s unallocated Fastershire capital allocation and any rebate payments received

It is proposed that the following allocations be made for each grant –

Type of grant	Max allocation per premise	Approx. Number of premises supported	Indicative financial allocation of grant
Fastershire Community Grant - described in Recommendation 1 above	£7,000	30	£210,000
Fastershire Business Grant - described in Recommendation 2 above	£20,000	20	£200,000
Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant - described in Recommendation 3 above	£600 (Subject to procurement)	1,000	£600,000
Total allocation			£1,010,000

	<p>Under the direction of the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure and in consultation with the Leader of the Council GCC officers will conduct a competitive procurement process in respect of a contract(s) for the supply and installation of the proposed 4G digital household solution and award the contract(s) to the preferred bidder. The estimated spend for this contract(s) is £600,000. This will be kept under review in line with demand and other funding becoming available, in which circumstance decision shall be sought in line with the council’s governance procedures.</p> <p>In consultation with the Fastershire Team colleagues from the Communications Team will support the marketing of the Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant. This will include stakeholder mapping, development of the application process and hosting it on GCC’s website. A budget of £10,000 will be provided to support this work. This budget will come from existing budgets either as an underspend within the Fastershire budget or from the Economic Development Team budget.</p>
<p>Background Documents</p>	<p>The Fastershire Strategy 2019-2022, is available on the Fastershire website at: https://www.fastershire.com/assets/file/FSB%20Strategy/Fastershire_Broadband_and_Strategy_2019-22.pdf</p> <p>Cabinet decision – February 2017 - Contract Award: Fastershire Broadband Strategy Stage 3 - Lots 3C, 3D, 3E and 4 Decision - Contract Award: Fastershire Broadband Strategy Stage 3 - Lots 3C, 3D, 3E and 4 (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p> <p>Cabinet decision – December 2019 - Fastershire Broadband Strategy 2019 – 2022 and the incorporation the Stage 5 Community Grant offer into the Fastershire Delivery Programme: https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1393</p> <p>Individual Cabinet Member Decision – December 2021 - Programme Change to Fastershire Delivery https://glostext.gloucestershire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1791</p>
<p>Statutory Authority</p>	<p>Broadband delivery is not a statutory function of the council, but the general power of competence is available under the Localism Act 2011 to enable councils to conduct the project as set out in this report.</p>
<p>Divisional Councillor(s)</p>	<p>All County Council Divisions will be affected by the decision taken in this report.</p> <p>With regards to Phase 1 of the Fastershire Household Grant, the focus will be on households located within the Forest of Dean – specifically:</p> <p>Newent – Cllr. Gill Moseley Mitcheldean – Cllr. Philip Robinson</p>

Officer	<p>Any representations should be sent to:</p> <p>Name: Ben Watts Telephone: 01452 426771 Email: ben.watts@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p> <p>By 5pm on 14 December 2022</p>
Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implement changes to Fastershire Community Grant ○ Launch new Fastershire Business Grant ○ Begin procurement of 4G solution for household grants • April 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conclude procurement of 4G solution for household grants • May 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch Phase 1 of the Digital Household Grant • August 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ End application process for Fastershire Community & Business Grants (all work to be completed by 31st March 2024) • September 2023 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Launch Phase 2 of Digital Household Grant <p>The Digital Household Grant will be kept under review and will be made available subject to budget availability, for all eligible households to apply for the grant until either the funding has been used or BDUK confirms the delivery date for households to receive broadband infrastructure upgrades delivered through Project Gigabit.</p>

Background

- 1) Demand for high quality digital infrastructure has never been greater. The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic on households and businesses has changed the way people live their lives. This has resulted in increased reliance and expectation for faster and more stable digital connectivity to support everyday activities.
- 2) Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) has a commitment to enhance digital connectivity for communities and business. At the time of authoring this report 96.9% of premises in Gloucestershire have access to Superfast (≥ 30 Megabits per second (Mbps)) broadband connectivity. This level of digital connectivity is consistent with the national position experienced across England (97.7%).
- 3) As demand grows for better digital access, the infrastructure supporting that demand must also grow to meet this demand. The government, having achieved the national target of 95% Superfast coverage, has evolved its aspirations to delivering improved infrastructure networks capable of supporting far greater digital download speeds.
- 4) Public sector investment in delivering broadband networks is managed nationally by Building Digital UK (BDUK), which is part of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS). In February 2022, the Levelling-Up White Paper reiterated the government's commitment that by 2030 Project Gigabit would deliver a nationwide gigabit-capable digital network for 99% of premises across the UK.
- 5) Where it is not commercially viable to invest in digital infrastructure, the government provides funding to subsidise investment. Despite this additional support, for some rural areas, it remains too expensive within the existing value for money rules to justify the level of subsidy required to deliver the digital infrastructure required. Where this is the case, alternative options need to be explored to understand what solutions best reflect the local circumstances.
- 6) At a local level, the Fastershire project manages the subsidised roll-out of digital infrastructure. Fastershire is a formal partnership between GCC and Herefordshire Council with support from BDUK.
- 7) Both local authorities agreed to work together to address the challenges of broadband availability across both counties. The project encourages the attraction of commercial investment and enables suppliers to invest in broadband networks by using a range of public subsidy mechanisms to improve the deployment in infrastructure in areas that have proved to be commercially unviable.
- 8) The focus of the [Fastershire Broadband Strategy](#) 2019-22 is to "increase superfast broadband coverage across the two counties through a mixture of contracts and grants prioritising those premises without access to 30Mbps. Where the Fastershire project has contracts for broadband deployment with commercial suppliers, it is based on a gap funding model. This facilitates broadband investment in parts of the county that are considered as being non-commercially viable by subsidising the commercial investment made by suppliers.
- 9) The Fastershire Broadband delivery programme is summarised in Table A.

Table A – Fastershire Delivery Programme

Stage	Title	Activities to 2022
1	Commercial Delivery	Actively monitor the market's intention to provide both superfast and full-fibre connectivity. Encourage and work with commercial providers to use their own investment to extend access to full fibre broadband.
2	Fastershire-wide Contract	Promotion of broadband delivery across the two counties. BT were awarded a significant contract to deliver superfast coverage.
3	Regional Contracts	Manage full-fibre rural contracts with Gigaclear on behalf of Herefordshire Council and Gloucestershire County Council. Gigaclear were appointed the supplier of subsidised broadband infrastructure across different lot areas following a competitive tendering process. The Fastershire Team manage these contracts to ensure they are successfully delivered on time and within budget.
4	Small Cluster Contracts	Conclude smaller lot contracts and explore opportunities to stimulate commercial full-fibre investment.
5	Fastershire Community Broadband Grant and bespoke grant schemes	Launch a Fastershire "Dynamic Purchasing System" through which local communities (either singly or acting in groups) can apply for Fastershire grants to pay for Gbps capable infrastructure.

10) In January 2017, Gigaclear was awarded several full-fibre rural contracts as part of Stage 3 of the Fastershire delivery programme pursuant to a Cabinet decision taken in February 2017. Four years into delivering these contracts Gigaclear was finding it increasingly difficult to achieve its contractual commitments due to the excessive costs associated with delivery. It was agreed to make several changes to their contracts pursuant to the Individual Cabinet Member Decision taken in December 2021. This included changes to Lot 2/3c (south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire (west of the River Severn)), where it was agreed changes related to some premises previously identified to receive subsidy support becoming part of Gigaclear's commercial programme; and the transferring of 1,187 premises out of the existing contract.

11) At the time this decision was made it was understood that those premises transferred out from the contract would be prioritised within BDUK's Project Gigabit. This is no longer the case as BDUK are currently reviewing their preferred procurement route for delivering Project Gigabit in Gloucestershire. There was also a commitment to review the community offer provided as part of Stage 5 of the Fastershire delivery programme to understand what support could be provided to those communities impacted by the decision.

12) There are two broadband grants currently available in Gloucestershire.

- **Universal Service Obligation** – this gives every home in the UK the legal right to request “decent and affordable” broadband. It is intended to bring faster internet to rural properties receiving download speeds under 10Mbps, or not connected to any fixed broadband network at all. The USO came into force in March 2020. The USO provides a legal right to request a decent broadband connection, up to a cost threshold of £3,400. This grant is delivered by BT.
- **Fastershire Community Grant Scheme** – In December 2019 GCC approved the formation of Community Grant scheme of the Fastershire Delivery Programme (Stage 5). This is intended to support those remaining premises without access to Superfast Broadband. For communities to understand if they are eligible, they first must check using the address checker on the Fastershire website. The Grant scheme is offered to aggregated groups of those premises. The grant is awarded based on a maximum allocation of £5,000 per premise.

13) The Fastershire Community Grant scheme is managed using a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) where a pre-procured set of suppliers can tender for contracts for the provision of Broadband connectivity upgrades. A portal has been created where communities can apply for the grant. This application process begins with communities expressing an interest in the scheme, understanding the qualification criteria, finalising the infrastructure specification requirements, inviting companies to tender for delivering the specification, reviewing quotes, and then the applicants select their preferred supplier. The outcome of the process is then independently reviewed by the Fastershire project’s team (comprised of local authority officers), before deciding whether to award requested funding.

14) Data provided by the Fastershire Team in February 2022 identified 5,671 premises in Gloucestershire that would qualify for at least one of the available grants described in paragraph 12 above. The largest number of qualifying premises occur within the rural areas, with the Forest of Dean reporting the greatest number of premises.

15) Despite the initial success of the existing Fastershire Community Grant Scheme the suppliers’ appetite to bid has declined, with seven communities recently not receiving any bids.

16) The main reasons for this include:

- Fewer properties without a solution, meaning grant communities are smaller, further from a connection point, sparsely populated and complex.
- Solutions are more expensive due to the investment needed compared to the area covered and density of potential premises.
- Future revenue for Internet Service Providers and network providers is low from these builds when compared to other more densely populated areas.
- Broadband providers are stretched for build resources across the UK having other priorities as heightened competition sees a rush to meet the commercial build of Project Gigabit by 2025.

- 17) The problem is indicative of the success of the project. The Community Grant scheme has provided a solution for those larger hard to reach communities. Those remaining are much more complex, small, and challenging builds.
- 18) A potential way to refresh the Community Grant is by increasing the amount of grant awarded for each property from £5,000 to £7,000. This may increase the number of providers participating in the DPS with the aim to encourage smaller agile companies to work alongside larger network providers and re-evaluating the market by re-tendering for those communities where there failed to be a single bid. Herefordshire Council increased the value of grant awarded to each property and it is proposed that GCC adopts an approach that will maintain consistency with Herefordshire's approach. It is proposed that £210,000 be allocated for this grant although this value will be kept under review and adjusted in line with budget availability. This should support up to 20 premises. It is proposed that qualifying communities can apply for this grant up until the end of August 2023 to enable all works to be completed by the end of March 2024.
- 19) The Marches Business Grant Scheme (MBGS) came to an end in June 2022. The MBGS was a European Union funded project which provided match funded grants to support businesses. For a business to qualify, it had to be Small to Medium Enterprise (SME) with a registered office and less than 250 employees, without access to high-speed broadband and providing a service from an eligible Business Sector.
- 20) Despite the success of this grant in Gloucestershire the number of businesses applying across the Fastershire area declined significantly over recent years. The Fastershire Team believe that demand for the MBGS declined due to the restrictive qualifying requirements of the grant. This includes the need for SMEs to prove that at least 80% of their transactions were 'business to business'.
- 21) Herefordshire Council recently renewed their business grant scheme to replace the MBGS. When defining the new business grant Herefordshire Council have agreed to relax the stipulations of the business grant so it is not as prescriptive in terms of the 'business to business' / 'business to consumer' mix. This will ensure that a greater range of business sectors can apply including smaller businesses, charitable organisations, and community interest companies. The updated grant allocation is for up to £20,000 per premise. For businesses to qualify for the grant they must provide 20% match funding. The DPS and portal developed for the Fastershire Community Grant will be used to enable businesses to apply for this new grant. For consistency across the Fastershire area, it is proposed that GCC adopts a similar scheme. It is proposed that £200,000 be allocated for this grant although this value will be kept under review and adjusted in line with budget availability. This should support up to 20 premises.
- 22) The potential delays in the roll out of Project Gigabit are a concern, especially for those remote and very hard-to-reach properties.
- 23) Discussions with the Fastershire Project Team indicate that the new Digital Household Grant being promoted by Herefordshire Council could provide a cost-effective solution for Gloucestershire. This is based on using the 4G network and would require the installation of an antenna and external 4G router on the premise. Herefordshire Council recently concluded a competitive procurement process and the cost per premise to

deliver the 4G solution is approximately £600. GCC would need to conduct a similar procurement process, but if the price per premise was comparable then the initial £600,000 grant funding pot made available to support this scheme would support up to 1,000 premises. Appendix A provides a summary of the grant qualification process.

- 24) It should be noted that the 4G solution is not the long-term solution for enhanced digital connectivity. It does however represent a short to medium term solution to premises experiencing limited download speeds while we wait for Project Gigabit to be delivered by BDUK.
- 25) It is proposed that the Digital Household Grant scheme would be phased in Gloucestershire, with priority initially focused to offer a solution to those households affected by their removal from the Gigaclear contracts in December 2021. This would equate to 1,187 premises in the Forest of Dean and cost approximately £712,200 should every household take up the grant offer. It is proposed that this area be prioritised until the end of August 2023. From September 2023, any eligible households across the county can apply.
- 26) To help raise the profile of the new Digital Household Grant scheme, every property identified in Phase 1 will be contacted directly by GCC to outline the updated grant offer available to them. Further information will be added to the GCC website to fully explain the grant and how it might be used for eligible premises.
- 27) The proposed changes to grants outlined in this report will bring consistency across the Fastershire area and maximise the funding available for communities and businesses in Gloucestershire without access to superfast broadband.

Options

- 28) Option 1 – That the Leader approves the Recommendations contained in this report.
- 29) Option 2 – That the Leader rejects the Recommendations contained in this report. By rejecting them it would limit the options available for Communities, Businesses, and households in Gloucestershire with download speeds under 30Mbps to access improved broadband services. The remaining grant options to improve broadband access would be to through the existing Fastershire Community Grant scheme and the Universal Service Obligation described in paragraph 12.

Risks

- 30) A major risk associated with the proposed changes to the grants is that the commercial providers do not tender for work using Fastershire's DPS for the community or business grant schemes. There are existing issues with many suppliers due to operational capacity difficulties and the reliance on third party contractors who typically prioritise those jobs offering the highest price for work. This is affecting all providers including BT leading to a difficulty to build at small scale and a reluctance to work in more challenging rural areas. BT and others are increasing their own direct labour teams to reduce the reliance on contractors, but it is likely to take up to 3 years before this comes to fruition which could delay delivery to those rural areas with download speeds under 30Mbps. The introduction of the new Fastershire Digital Household Grant is

intended to supply a 4G solution in the short-term while operational capacity issues continue to blight commercial providers.

- 31) The current target for 85% of the UK to be covered by commercial builds by the end of 2025 together with the increasing private equity investments is resulting in a focus in building at speed which will invariably lead to an increased risk that those premises already served with Superfast broadband will be prioritised over those rural areas with download speeds under 30Mbps. The changes made to the financial thresholds of both the Fastershire Community Grant Scheme and the flexibility provided in the updated Fastershire Business Grant scheme are intended to reignite interest in the market
- 32) There is risk that due to increasing demand for the technology used to support the 4G solution that GCC may not identify a value for money supplier of the technologic solution required to deliver the Digital Household Grant scheme. Herefordshire Council have completed a competitive procurement process for a similar solution. GCC will benefit from the Fastershire Team's experience and will undertake a competitive tendering process to identify a preferred supplier. In addition, a procurement strategy will be developed by the Strategic Planning Team to ensure a compliant and competitive solution is delivered.
- 33) There are known issues in some parts of the county where 4G signal strength is weak. This could relate to topography or distance from a 4G aerial mast. Where there is insufficient signal strength available other options will be explored. This could include use of a satellite-based solution although the costs of using a satellite are typically higher. See Appendix A for the known restrictions of the proposed 4G solution.
- 34) A further risk relates to managing expectations. There is insufficient capital funding available to provide a solution to all qualifying premises within the county. At the time of authoring this report there is a total funding pot of £1.01m for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to support grants applications. This value will be monitored, and regular updates will be provided to the Leader.

Financial implications

- 35) Within Gloucestershire the Fastershire project has £1.01m allocated for grant support in 2022/23 and 2023/24. This value may increase as part of the Borders Broadband Contract with BT the county council is entitled to a rebate payment based on the uptake of internet service users. This means we are expecting additional funding during 2022-23 which could be used to increase the size of the funding available to grant schemes.
- 36) The financial value of the grants awarded will be kept under review and adjusted in line with Gloucestershire's unallocated Fastershire capital allocation and any rebate payments received
- 37) Please refer to the Resource Implications section of the report for more information.

Climate change implications

- 38) The Fastershire project is an enabler for modern technologies and services offering improved digital connectivity The delivery of improved digital connectivity across the

county is fully consistent with the aspirations outlined within Gloucestershire's Climate Change Strategy and will support the county's plans for being carbon neutral by 2045.

- 39) Improvements in digital connectivity open opportunities for how services are provided, reducing the need to travel, reducing isolation and improving the local economy.
- 40) Improved digital connectivity is enabling many of the things people do including how they access work, how they shop, how they stay in touch with friends and how they pay for things. This, in turn, reduces the need to travel, which will help make a positive impact reducing Gloucestershire's transport derived carbon emissions and help support the Climate Change Strategy.

Equality implications

- 41) An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed.
- 42) Cabinet Members should read and consider the EIA to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

- 43) A new privacy notice will be required to cover the requirements of the Digital Household Grant scheme. This notice will be provided on the county council's website. It will be produced in consultation with members of the GCC Information Management Team.

Social value implications

- 44) Fastershire is focused on the delivery of physical digital infrastructure. This needs to be provided to enable multiple internet service providers the opportunity to deliver to local communities a choice in the range of services available.
- 45) GCC's "Building Back Better in Gloucestershire" Strategy (2022 – 2026) highlights the Council's commitment to build social value into the way the council designs, delivers and commissions its services. A key consideration for the Procurement Strategy to supply and install the 4G Directional Antenna and the external will be to embed Social Value at appropriate level based on value of the tender/contract(s).
- 46) As part of the Fastershire contract awards, suppliers are required to develop and deliver a communications and marketing plan which informs the planned delivery of the infrastructure work. This raises awareness of the enhanced broadband infrastructure being delivered to stimulate the take up of internet service providers.
- 47) Improved digital connectivity speeds delivered by the physical digital infrastructure will have a positive impact on local communities by contributing to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals.
- 48) Improved digital connectivity provides a range of opportunities for individuals to both participate and influence how they interact with society. This could be linked to an individual's health, wealth, and happiness through the delivery of health, education, employment options alongside commercial or local authority managed services.

Consultation feedback

49)N/A

Officer recommendations

50)That the Leader of the Council approves the Recommendations contained in this report:

1. Approves an increase in the maximum financial threshold of the existing Fastershire Community Grant Scheme from £5,000 per premise to £7,000 per household premise with download speeds under 30Mbps during the period 1 January 2023 until 31 August 2023.
2. Approves the creation of a new Fastershire Business Grant scheme during the period 1 January 2023 until 31 August 2023 to support business premises with download speeds under 30Mbps. The maximum grant will be £20,000 per qualifying business premise where there is a 20% match funding contribution from the business.
3. Approves the creation of a new Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant scheme to support residential properties with download speeds under 30Mbps that are unable to apply for the Fastershire Community Grant. This new grant will support improved digital connectivity based on 4G technology by supplying and installing a 4G Directional Antenna and the external 4G router as described in Appendix A of this report.
4. Delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure in consultation with the Leader of the Council to:
 - a) Conduct a competitive procurement process(es) in respect of a contract for the supply and installation of 4G Directional Antenna and external 4G routers. The proposed contract(s) shall continue initially for the period commencing on 1 April 2023 and expiring on 31 March 2025. Subject to demand and the council securing future funding this contract(s) may be extended, in which circumstance a separate decision shall be sought in line with the council's governance procedures.
 - b) Award such a contract(s) to the preferred tenderer; and
 - c) Implement a phased introduction of the proposed new Gloucestershire Digital Household Grant scheme described in Appendix A of this report. Phase 1 will include the 1,187 premises transferred out of Gigaclear contract's Lot 2/3c: south Herefordshire and Gloucestershire (west of the River Severn) pursuant to an Individual Cabinet Member Decision taken in December 2021. Phase 2 will open such scheme to any qualifying households across the county

Performance management/follow-up

51)Senior representatives from GCC and Herefordshire Council meet on a regular basis as part of the Fastershire Board which oversees the delivery of the project. The Leader of the Council will be kept informed of progress being made by the officers through the monthly briefings. This will provide the opportunity for any strategic, operational and/or financial issues to be discussed and addressed in a timely manner.

Appendix A

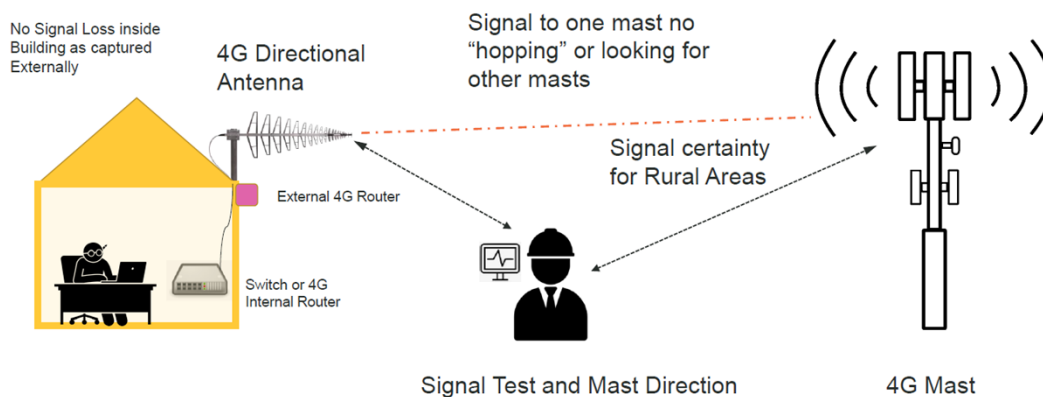
Gloucestershire's Digital Household Grant

The aim of the Digital Home Grant is to provide alternative means of Broadband communications to bridge the gap between the previously contracted Gigabit Fibre Broadband provision and a replacement under Project Gigabit.

The grant can only be used to cover the cost of supplying and installation of the 4G Directional Antenna and the external 4G router. It cannot be used to cover the costs of any ongoing rental or services charges. These will need to be covered by the applicant.

Illustration of proposed 4G solution offered through the new Digital New Household Grant scheme

DHG LTE Solution – 4G Broadband Rural



Known 4G Broadband Rural Challenges

- Geography – Distance from mast & physical obstructions affecting signal strength (hills and trees)
- Household – Signal clutter and radiation caused by cordless phones, Wi-Fi, and microwaves

Application process

- Household can register their interest for the grant through the county council's website.
- Their address will be checked against the list of qualifying premises. If the address is not recognised the request will be declined. If it is a qualifying premise a site survey will be arranged.
- The site survey will decide if the location of the household receives sufficient 4G signal strength to receive 4G Broadband. Site Survey to document and confirm that a viable signal and bandwidth of no less than 10Mbps can be achieved.

- If the household receives sufficient 4G signal strength to receive 4G Broadband an order will be placed, and the preferred supplier will arrange the install the equipment.
- If the household does not receive sufficient 4G signal strength to receive 4G Broadband the Fastershire Team will explore alternative options with the household. This could include use of a satellite-based solution although the costs of using a satellite are typically higher.

Digital Home Grant Qualification

Qualifying Premises

- The household must be located within a qualifying area –
- No plans for Gigabit Fibre in next 24 months.
- Named by Open Market Review (OMR) or Public Review (PR) as a premise with no commercial plans for Gigabit Fibre.
- Phase 1 will be open from the launch of grant to the 31 July 2023. It will include all properties located in the Forest of Dean that were removed from the Lot 2-3c Contract Gigaclear delivery contract in 2021.
- Phase 2 will open on the 1 August 2023 and will be open to any qualifying households across the county.

Qualifying Bandwidth

- Less than 30Mbps Bandwidth Download being delivered via Fibre to the Cabinet (FTTC) or Copper based networks.
- Bandwidth based on Internet captured via Speed test using Thinkbroadbandtest at Ethernet Ports on Router or published by Network Providers using their own Checkers i.e. BT Wholesale Broadband Checker.
- Bandwidth measured from domestic Wi-Fi will not be accepted as not recognised as Internet Bandwidth due to conversion to Wireless signals.

Qualifying Status

- Only one grant per Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN).
- Premise qualified by being a habitable domestic or business property where Council Tax or Business Rates are paid.

Qualifying Service

- 4G signal proven by Site Survey from supplier.
- Installation by Supplier to include external antenna.
- Current speeds available through 4G digital solution (4G LTE or 4G LTE-A) is greater than those provided by wired service provided by FTTC or Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line (ADSL).