

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 6 March 2017
Report of: Interim Head of Transformation
Title: Installation of telecommunications equipment on council-owned buildings.

1.0 **Summary**

- 1.1 On the 19 July 2000, the Council agreed to remove delegated powers allowing heads of service to authorise telecommunications equipment being installed on council-owned land or property. Since this decision was made, further research has been carried out concerning the relationship between telecommunications equipment and health.
- 1.2 As part of the Watford 2020 programme, two projects have been identified that require telecommunications equipment to be installed on council-owned property. These projects are described in this report and support the Council's priorities to "Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community" and "Champion smart growth and economic prosperity".

2.0 **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Deputy Managing Director and the Head of Service Transformation be given delegated authority to authorise the installation of telecommunications equipment on council owned property.

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3.0 **Detailed proposal**

3.1 **Background**

3.2 Following a recommendation of the Development Control Committee on the 11 April 2000, a Telecommunications Mast Scrutiny Panel was formed. The Panel reviewed various research surrounding telecommunication transmitters, including a summary of the Stewart report published 11 May 2000.

3.3 The Telecommunications Mast Scrutiny Panel recommended that the Council adopt a precautionary approach. On the 19 July 2000, Council agreed the Panel recommendation that “the relevant delegated powers allowing heads of service to agree to telecommunications being installed on council-owned land or property be rescinded”.

3.4 Subsequent to the Stewart report significant research has been carried out relating to telecommunication transmitters. According to reports by the World Health Organisation, Public Health England, Health and Safety Executive and others, there is no medical or scientific evidence that shows that installations that comply with legislation and guidelines can cause harm. All network operators are legally required to comply with the legislation and standards.

3.5 **Providing a Digital Infrastructure that supports economic growth, improves service delivery and quality of life**

3.6 Within its Corporate Plan, the Council has identified five priorities. These include:

- Deliver a digital Watford to empower our community
- Champion smart growth and economic prosperity

3.7 The Council’s Watford 2020 programme, includes two digital projects that require telecommunications equipment to be placed on buildings in order to provide coverage across Watford – Roof Top Wireless Business Broadband and A Low Powered Wide Area Network.

3.8 **Roof Top Wireless Business Broadband**

3.9 Anecdotally, many small local businesses report being trapped in a ‘stranglehold’ of high cost and poor quality fibre broadband connectivity by major market players. The Council has an opportunity to open up the market to enable new wireless, business quality broadband providers to offer commercial services locally, boosting competition and business consumer choice. This would be achieved through rental of rooftop space on Council and Housing Trust owned tall buildings to enable high capacity wireless broadband infrastructure to be installed. This would be offered at standard market rates, supported by standard property asset rental leases and on a non-exclusive basis.

This would not be subject to code powers (Electronic Communications Code Conditions and Restrictions Regulation 2003), so there would be no risk of obligation to site infrastructure. Soft market testing has been carried out, and discussions are taking place with potential partners.

3.10 **A Low Powered Wide Area Network**

- 3.11 Over the last few years there has been an emergence of smart cities that use technology to integrate and manage citywide infrastructure. Central to being able to deliver such a vision is the requirement to enable devices to effectively communicate with each other, for example – public bins being able to communicate when they are nearly full or parking sensors communicating the availability of parking spaces. This project will work with Digital Catapult (a government funded organisation supporting the economy by opening up opportunities for businesses to access new and emerging technologies) to provide a LoRaWAN wireless network across Watford. LoRaWAN is a Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN) specification intended for wireless battery operated devices in a regional, national or global network. LoRaWAN is an open standard which already has a committed and growing user base of more than 500 software, hardware or operator companies.

4.0 **Implications**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.1 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no financial implications in this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that even though Council rescinded the delegated powers this was before the elected mayor and cabinet model of governance was adopted by Watford. This function is now an executive function and does not need to be approved by Council.

Any authorisation will have to have regard to any third parties rights in relation to the property in question.

4.3 **Equalities/Human Rights**

- 4.3.1 Not applicable in relation to this item as this report is requesting delegated authority to install telecommunications equipment. Any proposals for using the infrastructure that affect service delivery will require a business case that considers any impact on equalities.

4.3 Potential Risks

- 4.3.1 No risks identified associated with providing the delegated authority. The projects are being managed using the Council's project management framework and report to the corporate Programme Management Board.

4.4 Staffing

- 4.4.1 There are no staffing implications from this report.

4.5 Accommodation

- 4.5.1 There are no accommodation implications from this report.

4.6 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

- 4.6.1 There are no community safety implications from this report.

4.7 Sustainability

- 4.8.1 There are no sustainability implications from this report.

Appendices

No appendices

Background Papers

- Mobile Telecommunications and Health Research programme Report 2007 - http://www.mthr.org.uk/documents/MTHR_report_2007.pdf
- Mobile phone base stations: radio waves and health - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mobile-phone-base-stations-radio-waves-and-health>

File Reference

None