



Watford Borough Council Executive Report

The Network Enabler

16th September 2014

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Glossary

WiFi:

Wi-Fi is a WLAN (Wireless Local Area Network) technology. It provides short-range wireless high-speed data connections between mobile data devices (such as laptops, PDAs or phones) and nearby Wi-Fi access points (special hardware connected to a wired network).

The more recent standard is called 802.11n (offering speeds of up to 150Mbps per channel or up to 600Mbps in total). It can be used in the 2.4 GHz or 5 GHz frequency bands.

The range covered by a Wi-Fi access point is from 30 to 100 meters indoors while outdoors a single access point can cover about 650 meters.

Small Cell:

Provision of localised street level 3G and 4G Coverage. Being adopted by the mobile operators to address local coverage problems through the deployment of wireless hardware to street furniture (street lighting/cctv columns).

3G:

UMTS or the Universal Mobile Telecommunications System is a third generation wireless network 3G technology which allows speeds of up to 2Mbps and supports the delivery of data;.

4G;

4G mobile phone networks offer superfast data download speeds - up to 10x faster than current 3G networks.

1. Executive Summary:

1. To provide some strategic contextual background to the opportunity in respect to the Borough of Watford and council owned infrastructure and the potential 'wireless' need within the Borough.
2. To outline the initial analysis in respect to the potential commercial and procurement related opportunities identified for Watford Borough Council and its key partners including West Herts College, Town Centre Partnership, Safer Watford and Watford Community Housing Trust to optimally enable wireless based services.
3. To outline the potential opportunities for the Watford Borough Council to be an enabler through their infrastructure to potentially support the wider digital economic and social agenda in the Borough.
4. To provide an overview of the current State of Market in the Borough of Watford.
5. To provide an overview of the provision of Metro Wi-Fi/Wireless in the United Kingdom.
6. To outline the initial outcomes in respect to the initial technical evaluation and feasibility, in respect to infrastructure owned by Watford Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council, with a view to determining whether Watford BC and its partners had infrastructure which could underpin a wireless concession model.
7. To outline the process of soft market testing undertaken, the interest of the market and the findings generated from both the individual dialogue sessions and subsequent written responses.
8. Watford Borough Council to note the following findings, outcomes and recommendations from the technical audit and initial internal and external evaluation:

Soft Market Testing Findings:

- Based on the Soft Market Testing Exercise to note that there does exist a genuine and real interest in the market to engage with Watford Borough Council in either realising the potential of utilising Infrastructure owned by the Borough and County Council, or through impending procurements and the potential application of social value to deploy wireless or wireless networks within the Borough.
- To note based on the responses received that there is some interest in a concession approach to deliver wifi in the Town Centre, however other wifi models are seeking investment from Watford Borough Council, either directly to fund the wifi deployment or through a tenancy of the network which will guarantee its sustainability.

Opportunities:

- To note the following key and viable opportunities identified through the due diligence and soft market testing:

Immediate Opportunities:

- Wi-Fi in the Town Centre being enabled through a concession to utilise council owned assets principally cctv columns, property and street lighting owned by Hertfordshire County Council.
- WiFi being enabled through an extended concession based on the delivery of cctv backhaul connectivity or through the use of the existing wireless network owned by Watford Borough Council which operates the cctv network.
- Provision of Wireless Broadband Connectivity into Business Parks within the Borough through the use of Council owned rooftops.
- Mobile Small Cell Provision within the Borough again through a concessionary approach.

Medium/Longer Term Opportunities:

- Provision of more socially related wifi in the likes of Community Centres through the application of Social Value
- Smart 'Borough' Strategy – holistic approach to utilising council service requirements to extend the scope of wifi coverage beyond that realised by a wireless concession.
- Development of a Smart Borough Wireless Strategy to deliver cost savings to the Borough

Strategic

- To ensure that any subsequent wireless project continues to complement and advance both the wider Digital Agenda being developed and implemented by Watford Borough Council and its key stakeholder partners within Watford.

Recommendations

Immediate:

- Noting the limited but definite interest in a concession based approach to secure the provision of wifi within the Town Centre, to progress a concession procurement strategy in the final quarter of this year.

As part of the concession and to reflect the level of collaboration between Watford Borough Council and its Partners and to enable other partners beyond Watford Borough Council to benefit from the Concession, this Report recommends that other partners consider being named within the framework concession providing the opportunity for such assets to be made available to the successful concessionaire in the future (including the West Herts College and Watford Community Housing Trust).

- To undertake more detailed due diligence of the council and county council owned assets and infrastructure to finalise the assets register, detailing potential sites and value.
- Whatever strategy is adopted to ensure best commercial value as well as support the delivery of wireless broadband connectivity into the wider community supporting wider social and economic initiatives.

- Despite this limited interest and to ensure that Watford Borough Council derive best value from their assets and infrastructure in respect to securing the provision of WiFi, not only within the Town Centre but on a wider basis throughout the Borough, to undertake a more detailed analysis of existing network infrastructure (wireless backhaul cctv network) which could support the provision of wifi but at reduced cost.
- Despite the limited interest in a wifi concession, to note and develop the continued interest in the market to utilise council or partner owned assets (Watford Community Housing Trust) to enable the provision of future Small Cell coverage, as well as rooftops, to support the provision of Superfast Business Broadband Connectivity into Business Parks. This could be realised through a separate concession procurement.
- To explore in more detail, including a technical audit of the existing wireless network operated by Safer Watford the potential of utilising this network to support other digital initiatives such as WiFi in the town centre and WiFi within social housing.
- To ensure that any potential telecom infrastructure opportunities are leveraged through Watford's major development projects, with the Council being an enabler through, for example Planning and the Community Infrastructure Levy, for provision of, for example ducting as an asset.

Strategic

- To review impending procurements to determine the options of realising WiFi in the likes of Community Centres/Youth Clubs and Social Housing through the application of Social Value.
- To work closely with other key stakeholders including Watford Community Housing Trust to develop a wider digital vision and strategy for the Borough of Watford, with particular regard to determining how such a vision and collaboration could realise opportunities in the Smart City Agenda, and leveraging potential opportunities for funding through the likes of Horizon 2020.
- In the event that a Concession is not considered feasible to encourage the current Town Centre Partnership and prospective Business Improvement District to consider ways in which the Town Centre Partnership could fund a wifi deployment and generate revenue through the application of services and solutions delivered by the likes of Purple WiFi.
- To adopt a more holistic approach to future procurements in respect to aggregating services to reducing costs, as well as creating, through the application of Social Value, additional digital benefits to support the wider social and economic aspirations of Watford Borough Council and its partners.

2. Background to WiFi

The strategy of metro wireless networks is not a new concept but has been in existence with the United Kingdom for a number of years with varying degrees of success. In its early manifestation the commercial deployment of town centre wireless networks was based on

the delivery of public internet access via laptops with the user paying either a monthly, weekly or daily subscription.

This model was very prescriptive and in most cases was relatively unsuccessful, to the extent that whilst access to the internet now via mobile handsets and PDA'S as well as laptops still remains an integral part of the justification of any business case to deploy a town centre network, the wireless market has increasingly moved away from a chargeable subscription model for internet access towards making internet access a value added free service with revenue being derived from sponsorship, advertising and other digital services, with additional charges only being levied for specific downloads such as games and music. Whilst noting this evolution towards free access it must be recognised that wifi in its own right will not support a long term investment from any private sector model.

In addition to this significant change and as both the public and private sectors moved towards the adoption of an IP strategy to deliver services, the business case for such Metro Wireless Networks in the latter part of the last decade did increasingly embrace requirements from local authorities in which city wide networks became subject to public tenders with the local authority becoming the main tenant on such a network guaranteeing to the infrastructure provider a sustainable revenue stream. Whilst such an approach had merit and received interest this model was faced with many challenges in particular existing contractual relationships and contract terms.

Most recently in the last two years the potential availability of wireless (wifi) zones in town centres has been utilised by the MNO's (Mobile Network Operators) in migrating demand from or the iPhone from a 3G Network, which could not meet the demands of the end user to a wireless network when available. Whilst such an approach is still being validated what has now emerged is a growing interest from the Mobile Operators in delivering enhanced localised 3G coverage and future localised 4G coverage through the deployment of Small Cell at a street level using street furniture assets. It is in this context that a succession of concession based agreements have been successfully implemented which has seen the provision of public wifi access backed by a longer term and sustainable Small Cell commercial model.

For the likes of many of the Inner London Boroughs as well as Glasgow, Manchester, Cardiff, and Plymouth significant revenue was derived from their concession agreements, however the market has now evolved to a point where guaranteed revenue from an upfront one off fee is now very unlikely and has been replaced by councils seeking to ensure that the concession is cost neutral with the value being derived from economic and social benefits. It is this scenario which is much more likely to apply in Watford.

Moreover beyond concessions it must be noted that there are examples principally in the case of Swindon where direct intervention by the Council in investing in a joint venture was unsuccessful, an episode which is well documented.

Despite this relative success the market again is evolving as described in Section 4 Evolving Concessions to respond to new requirements and models. However what still remains at heart of all these approaches is how public wifi can be delivered.

3. Strategic Evaluation

Watford Borough Council through performing its statutory duties, it's day to day engagement with the community of Watford and its promotion of the Borough as a centre for business, enterprise and retail; operates at the heart of the Borough of Watford. With such a

fundamental role and responsibility complemented in this instance by an asset portfolio and significant regeneration projects, Watford Borough Council is in a unique position to proactively drive a Digital Agenda for the Borough.

Accordingly this Report recognises the fundamental importance of Watford Borough Council's role and has sought to understand and identify how Property Assets, Street Furniture (including cctv infrastructure), County Council owned infrastructure (street lighting/traffic management), Council owned wireless infrastructure and other physical infrastructure could not only support a commercially viable model to deliver wireless connectivity, which brings economic benefit to the town centre, but could also be an enabler for a wider strategy supporting the future delivery of council and community services, enhancing mobile coverage within communities, and playing a part in supporting economic development across the wider Borough.

Furthermore, this Report also recognises the importance of collaboration of partners across the town and the wider Borough (including the Watford Community Housing Trust, Town Centre Partnership, Safer Watford and West Herts College) which this Report believes will add value to the potential proposition which could be offered to the market both in terms of assets as well potential opportunities.

However in recognising this role and opportunity this Report remains mindful of the importance of ensuring that any strategy adopted seeks to complement and advance the vision and delivery of the wider Hertfordshire Country Connected Counties Programme, which is the Hertfordshire part of the UK Governments Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme to extend fibre connectivity across the country.

4. Commercial Evaluation

Before evaluating the technical feasibility and potential commercial opportunity for the Borough of Watford, this Report would like to draw attention to the following initiatives and strategies currently being delivered or being developed in the United Kingdom:

Borough of Watford:

1. Existing Provision of Public Wi-Fi within the Borough of Watford:

Companies such as BT Wi-Fi, The Cloud and O2 remain very active within the main retail and commercial centre of Watford, as well as the wider Borough, in deploying in-building public Wi-Fi within Shops (Greggs), Leisure Venues, Cafes, Pubs, Restaurants (Pizza Express) and Hotels where free access is increasingly becoming the standard service provided.

For example The Cloud, as part of their Sky Go Strategy has an in-building presence in over 60 destinations within the Borough of Watford. In analysing this presence what must be noted however is that this Wi-Fi in-building coverage rather than outdoor coverage and therefore does not have a direct impact upon the opportunities available to Watford Borough Council, which has a focus on the potential of outdoor wifi coverage.

2. Wi-Fi in INTU Watford:

This Report notes that a public wifi provision is already available within INTU Watford. This provision which provides free access to customers is delivered by WiFi Spark over an in-building wireless network which is owned and managed by INTU.

Whilst INTU Watford is already and understandably pursuing its own commercial public wifi requirements, this Report recognises the close relationship between INTU Watford and Watford Borough Council and believes that the opportunity exists for all parties to strategically work together to the benefit of the wider Town Centre, and the potential Watford Town Centre Business Improvement District, through briefing each other on progress and exploring potential ways of ensuring that in the event that public wifi is delivered within the Town Centre, that there can be both commercially and technically ways in which Watford can deliver a seamless experience for visitors (to be included as a technical specification within any tender)

3. 3G and 4G Coverage in Watford

- **3G Coverage:**

Within the Borough of Watford there is already 3G Coverage delivered by all the Mobile Operators, however despite coverage being evident due to increasing demands on the network (amount of data that we as consumers are accessing and downloading) there is even in the Town Centre areas where 3G is evident (five bars on your phone suggesting maximum coverage) but connectivity is very slow (highlighted by the revolving wheel on your screen).

Whilst the Mobile Operators continue to upgrade their existing 3G Networks the Operators are now looking at alternative ways of addressing this problem including the use of WiFi Networks which are being used by some Mobile Operators as a way of offloading their 3G capacity issues and improving the customers experience; this is known as 3G Offload.

Whilst no particular evidence is currently available for the Borough of Watford, the availability of wifi and the option of 3G offload will represent part of a potential technical and commercial solution.

- **4G Coverage**

With the awarding of the 4G licences in March 2013, all the Licence holders are now in the process of rolling out their initial 4G coverage including the Borough of Watford for example the 4G deployment at Vicarage Road. In these early days of deployment the 4G Licence Holders (Mobile Operators) are looking to upgrade existing sites as opposed to building new sites however as demand for 4G increases and the consequent pressures on coverage, capacity and consumer expectations there will be increasing requirement for the 4G Operators to look towards much more localised street level coverage which is already known as Small Cell and entails the deployment of 4G wireless hardware on street furniture or buildings to enhance local coverage.

Whilst it should be noted that it is still very early days in respect to projecting future Small Cell coverage and requirements, based on this initial deployment all the MNO's are currently evaluating future coverage plans which will entail in the next two to three years the delivery

of more localised 4G street level coverage through the deployment of Small Cells using street furniture which will be reflected in the Borough of Watford.

4. Business Park Broadband

Whilst it is noted that there already exists a high level of competition in respect to the delivery of broadband within residential areas of the Borough of Watford, this Report notes the problems and issues being encountered by business in having access to affordable fast broadband provision throughout the Borough, principally within the Town Centre but also in other employment and business areas.

Whilst this Report is not recommending a direct financial intervention by the Borough Council, based on the scope and extent of the funded major regeneration projects within Watford and the responses received as part of the Soft Market Testing, there is an opportunity for Watford Borough Council to enable and promote 'better broadband for business' through use of its assets or through planning (CIL- Community Infrastructure Levy) and the provision of ducting within new business park developments which could realise cheaper and faster broadband for businesses in Watford.

The Market - Commercial Models:

In respect to the wider market this Report wishes to note the following developments in the Wireless Market with particular regard to the various commercial and funding models being enabled or implemented by Local Authorities and other Partnerships, including Business Improvement Districts, to deliver Wi-Fi within Towns and Cities as well as a more general wireless delivery capturing Business Parks.

1. Local Authorities Metro Wireless Concessions

Over the last two years a succession of local authorities have embraced and actively implemented a strategy of beneficial use of council owned assets to realise commercial, economic and social aspirations.

In each instance the local authority, by adopting this cost neutral approach, has engaged with the market through a concessionary procurement process to ensure best drive to secure a concession with a private sector company, who will utilise subject to a commercial agreement council owned street assets to deliver a wireless network.

What has been evident during this period is the continued interest of the market in progressing such opportunities but also an evolving expectation from local authorities, with a move away from a purely commercial opportunity, as was evident in Westminster, to a more balanced approach which also focuses on social and economic development issues and opportunities, as exemplified by Brighton and Hove, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Tendring, Plymouth, Leeds/Bradford and the London Borough of Camden.

Such concessions remain very popular with the public sector, however this should be tempered by potential bidders being more selective in their key targets, and that direct commercial opportunities through asset rental have diminished. In this respect Concessions

are now being increasingly focused on major cities who have yet to secure a concession such as Edinburgh and Newcastle or to local authorities within the M25 where Small Cell demand is already starting to emerge.

2. Local Authorities District Wide Wireless Rooftop Concessions

What has recently emerged through a concessionary approach is the appetite of the market to use the concession model to implement a separate rooftop concession as a springboard into business parks, with a view to investing in the deployment of wireless point to point and point to multi point wireless connectivity into poorly served business parks providing cheaper and faster broadband for businesses. In this respect, apart from a wireless concession for street furniture, a separate rooftop concession from Watford Borough Council's perspective would realise quicker benefits.

In some instances investment may still occur without the need for a concession as more companies become aware of the commercial opportunities in Watford and decide to directly invest in enabling business parks.

3. Smart City/Town Extended Concession

Whilst still in their infancy there is growing evidence that commercial models which adopt the fundamentals of a concessionary approach, but also seeks to embrace a council's wider smart city vision and agenda, are starting to emerge in the market.

This would entail the council identifying ways in which they would utilise the wireless network to deliver smart city applications and services, on the basis of realising cost savings, as well as the network playing an enabling role to deliver through wifi coverage social and economic benefit.

As indicated, such an approach is still in its infancy however discussions surrounding this opportunity are starting to take place in the likes of Glasgow and Brighton.

4. Council Investment **City of York**

As part of an initial pilot York City Council decided to directly invest in the deployment of a Public Wi-Fi Network to cover two main footfall areas within the City of York (Market Squares), with the access provided being free 24 hours a day. (Initial investment £30,000).

In terms of the pilot, the coverage area was relatively limited and was focused on addressing the tourism/retail sector within York, which attracts and supports over 9 million tourists a year.

As a funded pilot the uptake figures vindicated the decision to deploy a Wi-Fi Network Pilot (with over a recorded 1 Million searches of and connections to the network within the first two months) which has recently resulted in a wireless concession process being adopted, which has in turn resulted in a wireless concession being awarded to Pinnacle and Purple WiFi to deliver Public WiFi in York City Centre.

In terms of the merits of this investment there is an argument that York City Council were justified in approving this investment to promote the availability of free wifi in York, however it is interesting to note the subsequent roll out of this scheme was not funded by the council but by a concession and engagement with the private sector.

Although there are on-going examples of other towns procuring a wifi network, three key questions need to be acknowledged and seriously considered before adopting such a strategy:

1. What would the cost be and who will pay for it?
2. As a council are you prepared to accept that it is unlikely that any capital investment will be recovered?
3. If the network is delivering free wifi and is generating a minimal return who will pay for the on-going costs, customer services, development and management of the welcome page, coordination of potential advertising, engagement with business, network monitoring and management, content filtering, broadband backhaul?. Ongoing costs can vary but these could be in the region of £50,000 - £75,000 per annum.

5. City of Chester

Businesses working with Deva Hotspots have recently launched in the City of Chester WiFiciti which has seen the delivery of free Wi-Fi access in the main retail area of Chester. This delivery model is founded on businesses contributing to the deployment of the network (financial as well as access to sites) with the free access being 'sustained by advertising'.

www.devahotspots.com

Whilst this Report welcomes any new initiative and believes this advertising model should be monitored going forward, particularly as local and location based advertising is projected to grow in the medium term, this Report still believes that the business case of an advertising led model is very much in its infancy and has yet to demonstrate its long term viability.

6. Mansfield

Delivery of free Wi-Fi within Mansfield Town Centre was based on sponsorship and crowd funding which raised over £40,000 to support the deployment of a Wi-Fi network. The crowd funding strategy was co-ordinated by the Mansfield Business Improvement District.

Whilst again this Report commends such innovation, a major concern does remain in respect who will cover on-going costs in respect to maintenance, customer help desk costs which will need to be addressed if this network is going to successfully evolve.

Mansfield Town's My Hotspot

FREE Wi-Fi ZONE

ENJOY FREE INTERNET CONNECTION IN MANSFIELD TOWN

Steps to log on to the Wi-Fi:

- 1- Go to the settings screen on your mobile device
- 2- Tap Wi-Fi / wireless networks option
- 3- Once scanning is complete select Mansfield Hotspot
- 4- You are now connected
- 5- Opt in to register and be entered in a prize draw
- 6- Opt out to register to begin using the internet immediately

DOWNLOAD THE FREE MANSFIELD TOWN APP

- Available on android and I phone
- Find out about businesses in the town
- Access information about offers
- Find out about town events
- Navigate the town map
- Follow the heritage trail

I ❤️ MANSFIELD

MANSFIELD BID
Let's back Mansfield

7. Newark

Delivery of free Wi-Fi within Newark Town Centre based on a joint investment model between Newark and Sherwood District Council and O2; the cost of the equipment, its installation and maintenance is covered by O2 and the council will coordinate and commission any maintenance and repair through its own contractor on behalf of O2. This particular project was primarily driven by O2 looking to undertake some initial Small Cell Pilots with the WiFi element being an add on rather than a key driver for the business case.

<http://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/tourism/freewifi/>

8. Business Improvement District Investment

Evidence is also emerging where certain Business Improvement Districts working separately to the Local Authority have been exploring ways of raising funding from the BID Members to build a WiFi Network within their respective Town or City Centre.

Whilst it is encouraging to note such initiatives this is tempered by a note of caution as the provision of WiFi will come with an on-going cost which will still need to be funded either from further BID membership contributions or from revenue generated from the commercialisation of the Network which can be achieved but will require resources or other commercial partners.

Conclusion:

As this Report notes there are a number of options and opportunities for local authorities to play an active role in enabling the development of a wireless strategy and the delivery of wifi within Town/City Centres. In terms of what would work for Watford, based on the outcome to the Soft Market Testing this would entail, in the immediate term, both a concession for wifi and a separate concession for council owned rooftops to promote wider business connectivity, whilst also enabling the Town Centre and promoting digital inclusion.

5. EVOLVING CONCESSIONS

Beyond the models outlined in Section 4 and the evident change of interest in the market towards a traditional concession model, a number of legislative changes and innovative approaches to procurement are now emerging to offer new opportunities for local authorities in considering how they grant wireless concessions and realise their aspirations for the provision of public wifi.

1. Award to Mutuals and Co-operatives

There is a growing opportunity for social enterprises, mutuals and cooperatives in the wireless concession arena.

The mutual/social enterprise approach is now being explored by councils in a number of ways including the exploitation of their assets and infrastructure. For example it should be possible for a local authority to award a wireless concession having created a mutual organisation in partnership with a private sector player. This approach has a number of benefits including risk sharing and extending the territory for the private sector partner. Moreover it could also extend the scope of any concession by including other partners who could join the Social Enterprise with a view to addressing the council's digital inclusion agenda.

Whilst this approach has some merits this Report would wish to note that although there is interest from the market this concept is still very much in its infancy and should be monitored rather than actively progressed at this juncture.

2. Changes to the Concession Award Process

Following the recent issuing of a European Directive 2014/23, new procurement rules effecting concessions will take effect in the United Kingdom by the end of 2014 which will apply to the award of works or services concession by a public authority or a utility, where the estimated value of the concession is equal to or greater than EUR 5,186,000. Such concessions will have to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) and then awarded according to objective, pre-stated criteria.

As previously noted public service concession agreements have not fallen within the scope of the 2006 Public Contracts Regulations and are therefore currently not formally regulated, although 465 of the EC Treaty principles of proportionality, mutual recognition, transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment apply to the procurement process. A local authority has therefore been free to negotiate with tenderers, but has not been bound by minimum tender periods and has not been obliged to advertise in the OJEU, although most local authorities have decided to undertake this structure voluntarily.

With the implementation of this directive and the potential lifting of this exemption the impact on the length of time involved in setting up any concession for local authorities could be

substantial, potentially doubling the current voluntary notification timeframe of three to four months. This in turn will increase costs for bidders and may mean some are put off from tendering.

Whilst this Report notes these impending changes it is not envisaged that the value of the concession contract in Watford if there was interest would exceed the new value thresholds and therefore these new rules would potentially not apply.

3. The Social Value Opportunity – Application of the Social Value Act 2012

Both public and private sectors are looking at how The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, which became effective at the end of January 2013, could apply to wireless and wifi in urban areas.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Public Services (Social Value) became law on 8 March 2012 having been presented to Parliament on 30 June 2010 as the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill. It resulted from a Private Members Bill initiated by Chris White MP attracting cross party support.

The Act went live on 31 January 2013 when commissioners and procurers had to adhere to it. The Act places a duty on public bodies to consider social value ahead of any procurement. It applies to the provision of services, or the provision of services together with the purchase or hire of goods or the carrying out of works.

The Act states that: *"The authority must consider—*

(a) how what is proposed to be procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the relevant area, and

(b) how, in conducting the process of procurement, it might act with a view to securing that improvement."

The Act also enables consultation with stakeholders to better understand social value and improve service specifications, stating that: *"The authority must consider whether to undertake any consultation."*

The Act builds upon, rather than is a replacement for, existing procurement legislation. Therefore there is a duty to operate within the existing boundaries of the legal framework. The Act acknowledges this by noting that: *"The authority must consider.. only matters that are relevant to what is proposed to be procured and, in doing so, must consider the extent to which it is proportionate in all the circumstances to take those matters into account."*

This is consistent with existing legislation where public bodies *could* consider relevant social value if they wished. However, according to NAVCA, this Act is "a significant change as it proposes that public authorities *must* consider social value".

The Cabinet Office released a [Procurement Policy Information Note](#) on 20 December 2012 containing advice for commissioners and procurers.

The Act compels local authorities to consider wider values than simply price, such as environmental and social considerations, when procuring services. These tend to come back to the public amenity benefits listed above, although they are not necessarily identical. Although local authorities were able to do this before, the Act means social value *must* be considered. While 'social value' has no single agreed definition, the charity National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) puts forward the suggestion that:

"Social value is about maximising the impact of public expenditure. It looks at what is created, and sometimes what is forsaken, through a commissioning process. It is therefore

also about what we value in the public realm. Social value considers more than just the financial transaction. It includes, but certainly isn't limited to: happiness, well-being, health, inclusion and empowerment.”

In respect to the provision of wifi a local authority could put a CCTV contract out to tender asking what private sector suppliers can offer in terms of social value. A higher priced bid may include the provision of free public wifi using CCTV columns. Under the Act the local authority could choose the higher cost bid because of the social value it brings. Another example of social value may be that a particular contract offer will create a number of local jobs to service the contract, rather than using existing employees or those based outside the local area. Again this provision of social value means the local authority can opt for this bid if it believes the social value it brings is worth a monetary higher cost.

In Scotland procurement legislation has already incorporated social value, in this respect such an approach does offer a good example of how social value could work in practice following Glasgow's wireless concession award to BT. BT will be delivering wifi infrastructure, with the first phase of the Urban Wireless programme in place ahead of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games. This will result in 50 to 80 wireless access points being installed around high footfall areas and transport hubs around the city centre and parts of the East End. Not part of the concession but as an indirect consequence, 31 community centres and public halls in the city, operated by Glasgow Life, will offer free wifi to users of the centres during opening hours from later in 2014. This is designed to enable access to information on the council's online services as well as tourism and events, jobs and local businesses.

To date there has been no wireless-related procurement in which the Act has been applied, but councils are actively employed in considering this opportunity and understanding how it could be successfully realized. However in terms of leveraging social value councils are becoming increasingly aware of its potential through procurement opportunities and case studies will start to be published in the very near future.

Conclusion:

In respect this Report would recommend that Watford Borough Council review this option as part of wider procurement strategy and understand how this could apply in extending wifi into community centres and public buildings. In terms of social value and leveraging the provision of extended wifi this could be realised either directly through Watford Borough Council, or procurements (do not need to be ICT related) owned by the likes of the Watford Community Housing Trust.

6. Technical Evaluation:

Having undertaken a technical audit to determine the feasibility of utilising assets owned by Watford Borough Council this Report would wish to note the following findings and observations:

Watford Borough Council General Conclusions:

- Subject to planning guidance in and further technical assessment the public space cctv columns and wall mounted sites (within the Borough of Watford) owned and managed by

Watford Borough Council would form a sound basis to support the deployment of wifi within the Town Centre.

- Subject to more detailed discussions with Hertfordshire County Council who are the owners of the street lighting infrastructure with a view to securing their agreement to include such assets in a concession procurement, the street lighting would provide a comprehensive street furniture option throughout the wider Borough to support the deployment of WiFi and Small Cell.
- Subject to further due diligence in respect to a number of council owned buildings (freehold or leasehold consent) the opportunity exists to provide rooftop infrastructure to support the provision from rooftops commercial wireless backhaul services to business parks within the Borough.
- Through engagement with external stakeholders (Watford Town Centre Partnership) explore options of deploying wifi access points on privately owned buildings (Independent Retailers, Shopping Centre), with a view to delivering connectivity in the Town Centre where no council owned assets are available.
- Subject to further due diligence (availability of spare capacity on the existing network) the council owned wireless infrastructure supporting the Public Space CCTV Network could play a key role in leveraging the provision of WiFi and create a wireless platform for the delivery of other operational council services.

Questions and Outstanding Issues:

- Agreement with Hertfordshire CC to include county council street furniture assets (agreement could take the form of a Memorandum of Understanding). Whilst there are potentially sufficient council owned assets within the Town Centre to enable the delivery of a wifi network this would not apply beyond the Town Centre hence the importance of these county council owned assets.
- Wall Mounted CCTV Locations – determine the extent and scope of the existing wayleave consents – do they offer the option to deploy hardware without further consent or will further wayleave consent be required?.
- Planning Guidance in respect to ascertaining in principle scope of permitted development or full planning.
- Confirmation of the provision of 24/7 electrical power to street lighting. Without such a provision the Small Cell concession option may not be viable.
- More details required in respect to the network topology of the CCTV Wireless Networks.

General Conclusion:

Technically Watford Borough Council's Asset Portfolio, potentially complemented by the street lighting infrastructure owned by Hertfordshire County Council, constitutes a viable option to engage with the market which, because of its varied locations with power, would represent an attractive proposition and offer particular commercial, economic and social value.

7. Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement

As part of the internal evaluation, Regional Network Solutions engaged with a number of key internal and external stakeholders. Regional Network Solutions would like at this stage to acknowledge the participation of each of these stakeholders and record our thanks for their time and invaluable contribution.

Internal Departments engaged were as follows:

- Economic Development
- Community Safety –Public Space CCTV
- Highways (Transport and Infrastructure)
- Planning
- Customer Services
- Asset Management

External Partners engaged were as follows:

- Watford Town Centre Partnership
- Safer Watford
- Watford Community Housing Trust
- West Herts College

For the purposes of this Executive Report this Report would wish to note the following:

1. Considerable support and interest was expressed by internal and external stakeholders who welcomed the potential role of Watford Borough Council in adopting a strategy which could realise the availability of public wifi and improved broadband connectivity for businesses and the wider community in Watford.
2. Future work could be undertaken to explore how existing council owned wireless networks (CCTV Backhaul) could be used by other Council Departments or other External Partners as a means of , reducing costs and supporting wider channel shift aspirations for example within the Watford Community Housing Trust.
3. Opportunities for the evolving Town Centre Partnership to exploit the availability of Wi-Fi access to deliver a more digitally focused approach to people visiting Watford Town Centre. In particular how the Town Centre Partnership could use and exploit the wifi network to engage with visitors, deliver localised advertising through the welcome page and be a vehicle for promoting Watford Town Centre.
4. Interest in understanding how an initial wifi/wireless concession could be linked into the wifi network at West Herts College and provide a seamless experience for students.
5. Interest in understanding how an initial wifi/wireless concession could be linked into the existing Intu Watford Wireless Network to ensure a seamless experience for shoppers in Watford.

6. Opportunities to support businesses through cheaper business broadband.
7. As a secondary future activity opportunities to enable the provision of public Wi-Fi within public buildings (Civic Centre/Libraries) as part of a wider wifi/wireless initiative.
8. Interest expressed from Safer Watford on how a wifi platform within the Town Centre could support communication with visitors to the Town Centre (Football Matches, Night Time Economy).
9. Interest expressed by Watford Community Housing Trust in understanding how either Housing Trust Assets could contribute to extending the delivery of wifi or through procurement social value could leverage wifi.
10. Clear desire to collaborate internally to ensure that knowledge and opportunities are shared to ensure that best value is derived from any procurement or other engagement with the market.
11. Realisation and interest that there is a real need to develop a wider Digital Strategy for the Council.

8. Opportunity Analysis

With the Watford Borough Council and its partners having such a multi-faceted asset portfolio combined with the impending major development projects taking place in the Borough over the next few years it is important to analyse each opportunity individually as well as collectively with a view to determining 'the art of the possible' commercially as well as technically as detailed in Section 6:

- **Watford Town Centre:**

With its respective footfall through retail and commerce as well as current and impending regeneration projects, the opportunity for wireless in the Town is fivefold:

1. Delivery of a Wi-Fi based platform using council owned assets located throughout Watford Town Centre – either through a wireless concession which remains for a Watford a viable proposition or alternatively leveraging through use of an existing council owned wireless network or a future procurement strategy and the application of social value.
2. Extended delivery of Small Cell and Wi-Fi coverage using council owned assets within the wider Borough through a concession based model.
3. Delivery of wireless enabled business broadband into retail and commercial premises utilising council owned assets
4. Delivery of In building public Wi-Fi within public buildings – leveraged through social value or direct procurement..
5. Opportunity for advertising, delivery of content and via free wifi access with access to council and government websites (promote channel shift).

- **Business Parks:**

Noting the demand for better quality broadband provision for businesses particularly in business parks the opportunity in respect to wireless is twofold and should be progressed as a first stage in any strategy:

1. Delivery of point to point and point to multi point wireless connectivity from the use of council owned building assets into Business Parks.
2. Delivery of Wireless Backhaul to support, localised Wi-Fi and 4G Sites within Business Parks utilising either neighbouring council owned assets or privately owned assets within the Business Parks.

Opportunity to enable the delivery of cheaper and faster broadband connectivity for business and hence supporting SME's, economic development and regeneration

- **Council Owned Youth/Community Centres:**

Through the application of a social value provision linked to a future procurement (potentially) provision of backhaul (fixed or wireless) into each Community Centre to support a local Wi-Fi Hub within each building. In terms of the application of social value this application would not be restricted to telecom infrastructure but to other non-telecom procurements which would exceed the threshold.

From a Council perspective provision of localised Wi-Fi could support the wider agenda of digital engagement within communities and wider economic development strategy adopted by the Borough.

- **Watford Community Housing Trust:**

Whilst more extensive work needs to be undertaken to develop a wider digital strategy for the Watford Community Housing Trust, the Housing Trust can and should play a key enabling role in the first phase of the concession by including their assets as part of a concession framework.

Background:

In national terms data is available to highlight the challenges of digital inclusion and the strategies being adopted around the United Kingdom to address social and digital inclusion:

- In 2013, 36 million adults (73%) in Great Britain accessed the Internet every day (rising from 16 million in 2006)
- In 2013, 21 million households (83%) had Internet access.
- Only 64 per cent of housing association tenants had internet access
- Access to the Internet using a mobile phone more than doubled between 2010 and 2013, from 24% to 53%.
- Only 29 per cent of housing association tenants and 33 per cent of council tenants own an internet enabled phone
- In 2013, 72% of all adults bought goods or services online, up from 53% in 2008.
- It is thought that 4.1 million of the 8.7 million adults who have never been online live in social housing

Benefits:

In addressing digital inclusion and consequently social inclusion the benefits to those who are currently deemed digitally excluded but are enabled to go on line are and will be multi-faceted:

Education and Life Chances – If home internet access was available to the 1.6 million children who do not currently use the internet at home, it could boost their total lifetime earnings by over £10 billion.

Employment and Skills – It is estimated that between 75% and 90% of jobs require at least basic computer skills. Being online also gives people more opportunities to search and apply for jobs.

Saving Money – Offline households are missing out on estimated savings of £560 per year from shopping and paying bills online.

Welfare Reforms – The benefits system is changing. Since April 2013 Universal Credit has started to be introduced to replace many current benefits, including Housing Benefit and Job Seeker's Allowance. The Government wants 80% of applications for Universal Credit to be online by 2017.

Reduction in Crime – Studies show that the risk of reoffending is significantly reduced if offenders are equipped with on-line skills

Savings for the Trust – Significant savings potential for the Trust if a greater number of transactions are completed electronically. For example:

Face to face transaction – £7.40

Telephone transaction – £2.90

On-line transaction – £0.32

Social Inclusion – Potential to reduce possibility of isolation. Facebook's largest growth area is in the 'over 55' age bracket

Perception of the Trust - Improved perception of the Trust by Tenants as the Trust supports them in overcoming the barriers they face

The Opportunity:

Accordingly from the perspective of the Watford Community Housing Trust, the Trust as an enabler has the opportunity to drive this agenda through involvement in this concession based strategy:

1. The first phase of any concession could see Housing Trust owned rooftops being used for the delivery of business wireless broadband which in turn could both generate revenue and infrastructure which could be reinvested to to deliver more affordable broadband into social housing.

2. Beyond this opportunity and as previously described there would also be value in exploring the option of utilizing the existing council owned wireless network which uses Housing Trust Sites to support the provision of backhaul connectivity which in turn could enable the delivery of cheaper more accessible broadband for residents via existing infrastructure within the flats.

3. As previously detailed the opportunity exists to apply social value to future procurements with a focus of deriving additional investment or social benefit to support digital inclusion projects (possibly connectivity or training).

- West Herts College:

Whilst the property portfolio of West Herts College may be limited in scope the presence of the West Herts College within Watford Town Centre and its wider role within the Community does mean that that West Herts College could and should play in key role in any future wireless concession

This role could be in a number of direct and non-direct ways including:

- Presence of the Town Centre WiFi and how this could support students outside the College.
- Major student demand for connectivity which will make Watford Town Centre a more attractive proposition
- Opportunities for the College to work with the successful concessionaire in supporting student based projects and digital solutions. For example in Carlisle the local college is heavily involved in supporting the Council in designing a new Visitors App for the City a direct result of the Wireless Concession.
- Future provision of WiFi in Community Centres/Youth Clubs and how this could support the College's outreach into the Borough.

- **Watford Town Centre Partnership:**

As previously outlined in this Report the provision of WiFi in Public Spaces within the Town Centre will provide a platform for the Town Centre Partnership to engage with visitors through the welcome page, advertising and promotion.

Although it is anticipated that a Concession will realise the provision of wifi in the Town Centre the Town Centre Partnership in the event that this concession is not forthcoming could emerge as the enabler through direct funding of a wifi network. Not the preferred option but an option which should be noted.

- **Smart City/Borough Strategy:**

As a longer term aspiration and through either a procurement vehicle or commercial collaboration seek funding to become the enabler to deliver a platform to support the delivery of smart services and solutions with subject to procurement an opportunity to reduce costs as well as extend wifi coverage to areas and communities which would not usually be viable in respect to a commercially sustainable model.

- **Indirect Benefits:**

Whilst not directly linked to the use of Council Assets and the concessionary model, through promoting Watford interested companies will start to look to invest further in the Borough of Watford for example undertaking sub loop unbundling of Business Park Cabinets (PCP's) currently not enabled by BT but could be enabled to support their wider wireless business case.

9. Soft Market Testing

As part of the Soft Market Testing Exercise approaches were made to six companies inviting them to participate in this initial soft market testing who were subsequently involved in the dialogue session namely:

- Twin Technologies/Huwawi
- British Telecom
- UK Broadband
- Freedom
- Purple WiFi

- Arqiva

To ensure a well-defined cross section of responses, we sought to ensure that we were involving a number of companies local, regional and national with a variety of business models and service delivery models. In this respect two major players' national players namely BT and Arqiva were invited as well as two local companies namely Freedom and Twin Technologies who had already engaged with Watford Borough Council with a view to support the Council's wider digital strategy for the Town Centre and wider Borough.

However it should be noted that this was only a selected group of participants and that we would anticipate, in the event that the Watford Borough Council were to formally engage with the market, interest would be received from other interested companies reflecting ongoing changes in the market.

Of the six companies invited to participate all responded to the invitation. In addition to the six invited an additional dialogue took place with the Wireless Infrastructure Group who have a commercial contract with INTU Watford to deliver an In-Building Mobile Infrastructure with a view to determining their potential interest.

Based on this initial dialogue and subsequent responses this Report wishes to note the very keen interest expressed from the participating companies in identifying the potential value of the infrastructure, understanding in more detail the opportunity from a commercial and technical perspective and wishing to actively engage commercially and strategically with Watford Borough Council. Once again what is of worthy note is that there was a wide ranging response from council investment to a concession at no cost to the Council to realise the Council's wifi aspirations.

A variety of commercial models were highlighted. What is worthy of note is that the majority of the propositions focused on delivering wifi within the Town Centre whether through council investment, exploring opportunities through procurement and social value or as a concession. A further theme which consistently ran through each proposition was the interest in utilising the wider scope of the Infrastructure as opposed to just a single part of the portfolio. Models ranged from a the provision of wifi through the procurement of connectivity, specific provision of Wi-Fi within the high footfall areas, delivery of Wi-Fi based on public investment and a wider strategic approach to Wi-Fi and Wireless connectivity within the Borough based on leveraging other council services or contracts.

This Report would wish to note the following key elements of each Soft Market Testing Response; further details of each response are detailed in Appendices A to F:

1. Arqiva (Appendix A)

- Very interested in engaging with Watford Borough Council.
- Sees value in the Council Asset Portfolio but further due diligence will be required.
- Continued interest in responding to a concession based model
- Interest in the delivery of wifi in high footfall areas –Watford Town Centre
- Interest in exploring and progressing a Small Cell Concession based model.
- Interest in a separate opportunity in respect to the rooftops leveraging council owned rooftop opportunities by marketing them on behalf of the Council to the Mobile Operators and other wireless operators.

2. UK Broadband (Appendix B)

- Limited interest in directly engaging with Watford Borough Council, no evidence of a council anchor tenancy a pre-requisite to sustain the commercial model from day one.
- If the opportunity of Watford Borough Council being an anchor tenant on a wireless network was available and could be explored in more detail then interest would exist in justifying investment to support the delivery of ultrafast broadband for Business in Watford.
- Despite the apparent absence of such an opportunity UK Broadband expressed an interest in the impending regeneration projects at Watford Junction and Western Gateway and indicated an interest in directly engaging with the Developers to explore business broadband opportunities.
- Willingness to explore ways of addressing social and digital inclusion but consistently stressed the need to adopt a sustainable model entailing an anchor tenancy business case to support and sustain the less commercial social activities and initiatives.

3. Purple WiFi (Appendix C)

- Very interested in engaging with Watford Borough Council
- See the Council performing an enabling role through providing access to its assets to enable the deployment of wifi.
- Keen to explore with Watford Borough Council a wider Smart Agenda as opposed to a purely wifi strategy.
- Sees value in the Council Asset Portfolio in leveraging opportunities to address social and digital inclusion.
- Would work through their Channel Partners to engage with Watford Borough Council whether through funded opportunities (BID Sponsorship) or through Procurement including concession based.
- See their role in adding value to Councils who are looking to embrace a holistic approach to delivering a digital agenda.

4. BT (Appendix D)

- Very interested in engaging with Watford Borough Council
- Whilst noting concessions have been successful deployed over the last two to three years and recognizing that the concession model may still be applicable to Small Cell, interest tempered by a view that a concession may not offer the best commercial and strategic fit for the Borough of Watford.
- Opportunity outlined in respect to leveraging wifi through a holistic approach to delivering cctv services with BT Redcare (BT Redcare Department within BT responsibility for connectivity to support CCTV and Alarm Systems) and opportunities for extending the scope and coverage of cctv services within the Borough of Watford.
- Commercial Model – seeking a technical and strategic solution which would be based on exploiting BT Redcare presence in Watford to deliver the wider wireless agenda.
- Engagement – leveraging existing contracts, through procurement and the application of social value as a concession or a combination of all three options.

5. Freedom (Appendix E)

- Very interested as a local company in engaging with Watford Borough Council
- Focus on delivering an integrated wifi/wireless network within the Town Centre which not only will realise the aspiration for free wifi but offer the potential to support the delivery of other services.
- See value in utilizing council owned assets and infrastructure to support the delivery of the network.
- Strategy and model based on the Council either contributing to or paying completely for the network.
- Projected level of capex detailed based on the premise that the network to be successful must deliver a high level of connectivity and service.
- Proposed capacity of the network would have equaled if not surpassed most other Town Centre Public WiFi Networks.
- Recognition that wifi in its own right will not generate sufficient revenue to fund the operational costs of the network.

6. Twin Technology (Appendix F)

- Very interested as a local company in engaging with Watford Borough Council
- Focus on delivering an integrated wifi/wireless network throughout the Borough which not only will realise the aspiration for free wifi but offer the potential to support the delivery of other services and become a platform for mobile network offload and Small Cell.
- See value in utilizing council owned assets and infrastructure to support the delivery of the network.
- Sees no value in a concession model which in their opinion has failed.
- Commercial Model dependent on initial investment from stakeholder partners and the creation of a Community Interest Company which will support wider digital and social initiatives.
- Looking to develop a network which generates revenue and drive savings for its partners which will make the network self-sustaining (however no indication of operational costs).

10. Timetable

Preceding on an assumption that Watford Borough Council was to adopt a concessionary strategy in respect to both the delivery of wifi via street furniture and a separate concession for rooftops and delivery of business broadband the following timetable as detailed could be considered:

October 2014	Consultation WBC Leadership
October/November 2014	Further Stakeholder Engagement

November 2014	Infrastructure Due Diligence
November/December 2014	Procurement Preparations
9 th January 2015	Information Day
9 th January 2015	PQQ Issued
6 th February 2015	PQQ Response Deadline
Wc 9 th February 2015	PQQ Evaluation and Shortlist
16 th February 2015	ITT
6 th March 2015	Draft ITT Responses to be submitted
Wc 9 th March 2015	Dialogue Sessions
27 th March 2015	ITT Submissions
Wc 30 th March 2015	ITT Evaluation and Recommended Preferred Bidder
April 2015	Internal Approval
End April 2015	Concession Awarded
June 2015	1st Phase Deployment Commences

11. Recommendations

To recommend that Watford Borough Council adopt the following strategy and accompanying actions:

Recommendations

Immediate:

- Noting the limited but definite interest in a concession based approach to secure the provision of wifi within the Town Centre, to progress a concession procurement strategy in the final quarter of this year.

As part of the concession and to reflect the level of collaboration between Watford Borough Council and its Partners and to enable other partners beyond Watford Borough Council to benefit from the Concession, this Report recommends that other partners consider being named within the framework concession providing the opportunity for such assets to be made available to the successful concessionaire in the future (including the West Herts College and Watford Community Housing Trust).

- To undertake more detailed due diligence of the council and county council owned assets and infrastructure to finalise the assets register, detailing potential sites and value.
- Whatever strategy is adopted to ensure best commercial value as well as support the delivery of wireless broadband connectivity into the wider community supporting wider social and economic initiatives.
- Despite this limited interest and to ensure that Watford Borough Council derive best value from their assets and infrastructure in respect to securing the provision

of WiFi, not only within the Town Centre but on a wider basis throughout the Borough, to undertake a more detailed analysis of existing network infrastructure (wireless backhaul cctv network) which could support the provision of wifi but at reduced cost.

- Despite the limited interest in a wifi concession, to note and develop the continued interest in the market to utilise council or partner owned assets (Watford Community Housing Trust) to enable the provision of future Small Cell coverage, as well as rooftops, to support the provision of Superfast Business Broadband Connectivity into Business Parks. This could be realised through a separate concession procurement.
- To explore in more detail, including a technical audit of the existing wireless network operated by Safer Watford the potential of utilising this network to support other digital initiatives such as WiFi in the town centre and WiFi within social housing.
- To ensure that any potential telecom infrastructure opportunities are leveraged through Watford's major development projects, with the Council being an enabler through, for example Planning and the Community Infrastructure Levy, for provision of, for example ducting as an asset.

Strategic:

- To review impending procurements to determine the options of realising WiFi in the likes of Community Centres/Youth Clubs and Social Housing through the application of Social Value.
- To work closely with other key stakeholders including Watford Community Housing Trust to develop a wider digital vision and strategy for the Borough of Watford, with particular regard to determining how such a vision and collaboration could realise opportunities in the Smart City Agenda, and leveraging potential opportunities for funding through the likes of Horizon 2020.
- In the event that a Concession is not considered feasible to encourage the current Town Centre Partnership and prospective Business Improvement District to consider ways in which the Town Centre Partnership could fund a wifi deployment and generate revenue through the application of services and solutions delivered by the likes of Purple WiFi.
- To adopt a more holistic approach to future procurements in respect to aggregating services to reducing costs, as well as creating, through the application of Social Value, additional digital benefits to support the wider social and economic aspirations of Watford Borough Council and its partners.
