

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL COMMUNITY WI-FI PILOT UPDATE

People and Places Advisory Committee - 14 June 2022

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer People and Places

**Status:** For consideration

**Key Decision:** No

**Executive Summary:** Kent County Council has been invited to present an update to the committee on its Community Wi-Fi pilot programme in Kent.

**This reports support the Key Aim of:** the Community Plan.

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr. Lesley Dyball

**Contact Officer:** Kelly Webb, Ext. 7474

**Recommendation to:** People and Places Advisory Committee

(a) To receive and note report.

**Reason for recommendation:** To acknowledge the work being undertaken to date by Kent County Council to deliver a Community Wi-Fi pilot programme in Kent.

### Introduction and Background

- 1 Kent County Council (KCC) Community Wi-Fi project will create an opportunity for low-income areas, who are most digitally disadvantaged, to have the ability to access community Wi-Fi, using the KPSN (Kent Public Services Network), in the area that they live.
- 2 Community Wi-Fi will help support those on a low income, by giving access to digital services and information. It will benefit those who may be reluctant to have internet installed due to confidence and motivation or who do not have the monies to pay for a broadband/data contract due to lack of income/debts. The project will address the 'access barrier' to digital exclusion and provide an opportunity for low income, digitally disadvantaged to access services 'digitally' that are meaningful to them. Without this access to Wi-Fi, even if a person has the skills to access, they are unable to view 'digital' support and enhance their digital skills.
- 3 The project is being funded by KCC via their Helping Hands fund, which will be used to provide targeted support to low-income households and households in financial distress, including individuals and families; and local business.

- 4 KCC will oversee the delivery of the project, including project analytics, installation, initial maintenance, website safety measures and support from KPSN.
- 5 KCC's objectives for the project are as follows:
  - Work with KPSN to develop community Wi-Fi, in low-income areas across the county, to ensure those on low income can access services digitally.
  - Work collaboratively with public, district, parish, town councils as well as the voluntary sector, social housing groups and schools to promote the use of the community Wi-Fi.
  - Ensure there is a robust system in place to manage the associated costs upon completion of the project to ensure the projects is sustainable into the future.
  - Work with residents to ensure they have the confidence and feel safe to use the community Wi-Fi, and that they have the skills and devices needed to access.
- 6 KCC has been invited to attend People and Places Advisory Committee to provide an update on their Community Wi-Fi pilot project being delivered in Kent. Sevenoaks District is being proposed as a potential pilot area.

#### **Other options Considered and/or rejected**

Not applicable.

#### **Key Implications**

##### Financial

There are no current financial implications relating arising from this report.

##### Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this report.

##### Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

#### **Conclusions**

KCC has been invited to attend People and Places Advisory Committee to provide an update on their Community Wi-Fi pilot project being delivered in Kent. Sevenoaks District is being proposed as a potential pilot area.

**Appendices**

None.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Sarah Robson**  
**Chief Officer People and Places**