



To: Economy and Jobs Policy Board

On: 20 May 2015

Report by: Director Development and Housing Services

Heading: Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme which assists businesses and third sector organisations to meet the upfront capital costs of a high speed/high grade broadband connection to their premises.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
- (i) Note the information contained within the report with regard to the roll out of the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme in Renfrewshire.
 - (ii) Agrees that Renfrewshire Council participate in the Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme as a means of providing greater access to superfast and ultrafast broadband services for small and medium sized enterprises in Renfrewshire.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme is a UK government-funded scheme to improve the internet connectivity of small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The scheme is led and funded by, Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK), a unit within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- 3.2 Broadband Connection Vouchers are being delivered by 50 City Regions across the UK. Connection Vouchers will be made available on a first come, first served basis until 31 March 2016.
- 3.3 The scheme involves all of the local authorities within the Glasgow & Clyde Valley City Region and provides grants of up to £3,000 to SMEs including registered

charities, social enterprises and sole traders to cover the installation costs of a faster and better broadband service.

4. Rollout of the Broadband Voucher scheme

- 4.1 The Broadband Connection Voucher Scheme has been available to Renfrewshire SMEs since 1 April 2015 and has been promoted on the Council's web page, Invest in Renfrewshire materials and social media since then. Additionally the Invest in Renfrewshire Business Team, the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses have individually contacted all Renfrewshire Business contacts to make them aware of the scheme.
 - 4.2 The availability of superfast broadband can greatly increase the productivity of a business. A good broadband connection means there is greater capacity to send and receive data electronically. This will allow files to be downloaded and uploaded faster and emails sent and received more quickly, which will be particularly beneficial for companies that regularly need to send or archive large data files.
 - 4.3 The application process has been set nationally by Broadband Delivery UK. Once approved the SME has up to 28 days to place their order with their chosen supplier. The SME chooses an offer from a supplier registered with BDUK, based on their individual requirements.
 - 4.4 The scheme is technology neutral (i.e. no bias toward any particular technology type) and must result in a step change in connectivity.
 - 4.5 Edinburgh City Council (CEC) will be responsible for issuing the broadband vouchers and paying the supplier, once the work is complete, claiming back from BDUK on a quarterly basis the Capital Grant and the Project Management Costs. CEC will ensure that Renfrewshire Council is kept up-to-date with the numbers and locations of applications received.
 - 4.6 The rollout out of vouchers will be based on demand and therefore at this stage numbers in Renfrewshire cannot be estimated.
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Implications of the Report

- 1. **Financial** – There is no cost to Renfrewshire Council to participate in the Broadband Voucher Scheme.
- 2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
- 3. **Community Planning – Jobs and the Economy** – Providing greater access to superfast and ultrafast broadband services for SMEs will help to create new business opportunities and economic growth.
- 4. **Legal** – None
- 5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** – None.

7. **Equality & Human Rights**

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. **Health & Safety** - None

9. **Procurement** - None

10. **Risk** – None

11. **Privacy Impact** - None

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