

Report on	1. Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme 2. Women in Business Report on 'Yes You Can' Programme – Year 1 3. Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI 4. Consultation on proposed salary threshold – UK immigration system post- Brexit
Date of Meeting	14 November 2019
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Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme</p> <p>The next generation of mobile communications, 5G, is beginning to gather momentum, although many elements of its delivery and use are still in development.</p> <p>5G is expected to deliver faster and better mobile broadband services to consumers and businesses, and to enable innovative new services for industry sectors, including manufacturing, transport, tourism, immersive technologies and healthcare.</p> <p>It will address the growing requirements for mobile data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Data Driven by better customer experience, more connected devices, higher bandwidth requirements, virtual and augmented reality, etc. • More Devices Driven by smart agriculture, e-health, transport and logistics, environmental monitoring, smart tourism etc. • Instant Response Driven by vehicle to vehicle communications, remote control applications, drone delivery, smart manufacturing, etc.

	<p>Citizens are likely to demand 5G deployment, along with the extension of 4G where it is not already available.</p>
2.2	<p>Women in Business Report on ‘Yes You Can’ Programme – Year 1</p> <p>In March 2018, Council approved a proposal from Women in Business to all 11 Councils for the delivery of a three-year collaborative regional programme entitled ‘Yes You Can’ between Women in Business, Invest NI and the 11 Councils to increase and support levels of female entrepreneurship. The initiative is a collaboration resulting from a unique situation: An American entrepreneur originally from NI, impressed with the efforts of Women in Business to encourage new female entrepreneurs, made a financial commitment (£200,000) towards the development of other support initiatives, the 11 Councils and Invest NI are each contributing £200,000 (Mid Ulster District Council’s contribution is approximately £6,060 for each of the 3 years). Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council are acting as Lead Council on behalf of the 11 Councils.</p>
2.3	<p>Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI</p> <p>Invest NI have developed a portal that will allow Councils to access Invest NI’s CRM system. This will allow business referrals from Councils to Invest NI and vice versa to be captured and will ensure the customer is signposted and receives the appropriate advice. Invest NI has also provided Council officers with training on the CRM.</p> <p>Councils have now received with a Data Sharing Agreement from Invest NI to agree and sign.</p>
2.4	<p>Consultation on proposed salary threshold – UK immigration system post-Brexit</p> <p>The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) made a call for evidence from employers and other stakeholders to the salary threshold which they have set at the 25th percentile of full-time earnings distribution, or £30,000 minimum salary requirement for foreign workers seeking five-year visa post-Brexit. This threshold recommendation is UK-wide and regional variation is not considered. Consultation responses had to be submitted by 5th November, however, if any Councillor has further comments they wish to add, these can be forwarded as an addendum.</p>
3.0	<p>Main Report</p>
3.1	<p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme</p> <p>5G is likely to be delivered as a patchwork of technologies, using a range of radio frequencies. Some of those frequencies are widely used today, for example for TV and mobile phones. Other, higher frequencies are also planned. The new technology, and its benefits, are likely to be deployed first to urban communities. Without intervention, they are likely to come much more slowly, if at all, to rural communities, because of the challenging investment case.</p>

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has already made funding available for a variety of initiatives aimed at removing the barriers to the deployment of 5G, with the objective of ensuring that the UK should be a world leader in 5G communications. It is reasonable to assume that substantial further funding will be made available in future.

Some people have expressed concerns about the health risks of 5G, particularly in respect of the extremely high (so-called mmWave) frequencies. The government's documented position is that there is no convincing evidence of health effects within the regulatory limits.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) recently announced the Rural Connected Communities (RCC) funding as part of the UK Government's 5G Testbeds and Trials programme. A short call for funding was opened on 27 August 2019 and closing on 25 October 2019. The fund aims to identify the means to address both supply side and demand side barriers to the deployment of 5G.

The FFNI* programme (Full Fibre Northern Ireland) is ideally suited to coordinating the part of local government in the delivery of 5G, and to leading bids for future Government funding. It has built strong relationships with other key stakeholders including universities, SMEs and mobile network operators and other suppliers. These stakeholders have expressed an interest in working with FFNI to address the issues of 5G deployment in Northern Ireland.

**FFNI – Full Fibre Northern Ireland – is the consortium of the ten rural councils in NI, hosted by Newry, Mourne and Down whose objective is to play an active part in delivering the best digital infrastructure for Northern Ireland.*

Key issues:

Citizens, especially in rural areas, could benefit significantly from 5G in the future. However, without intervention, 5G will come slowly, if at all to much of our region, mirroring the experience of broadband and 4G deployment.

DCMS (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport) future funding provides an opportunity to reduce the digital divide and lead on rural 5G rollout, to create a 5G communities and ensure investment in mobile connectivity.

The timelines for completing a bid for the Rural Connected Communities fund were however extremely short (8 weeks). Since future funding calls may follow a similar pattern, FFNI should be ready to react to such calls.

There are also perceived health concerns about a small part of the 5G spectrum. Due to the complex nature of the topic, external expertise is likely to be required to assist in funding bid preparation. External expertise is also likely to be necessary in respect of some elements of co-ordinating 5G activity more generally. See Appendix 1.

	<p>FFNI has the means to co-ordinate a joined-up approach to 5G in our region - to work with key stakeholders to create a 5G forum to seek; to agree a common approach to 5G in NI and ensure alignment with DfE (Department for the Economy) and their current and future 5G policy framework.</p>
3.2	<p>Women in Business Report on ‘Yes You Can’ Programme – Year 1</p> <p>With Year 1 of the programme approaching completion in December 2019, Women in Business have provided an update on the range of activities completed in Mid Ulster during this period, to facilitate the release of Councils’ Year 2 Contribution. (Appendix 2).</p>
3.3	<p>Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI</p> <p>The Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI (Appendix 3) has been reviewed by Council’s legal services department and can now be signed and returned to Invest NI.</p>
3.4	<p>Consultation on proposed salary threshold – UK immigration system post-Brexit</p> <p>The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) have been commissioned by the government to carry out an in depth analysis of potential future salary thresholds, as part of the UK’s immigration system post-Brexit. The MAC has recommended a minimum salary threshold of £30,000 for individuals from outside of the UK and Ireland.</p> <p>Such a restriction on UK entry of migrant workers could strip Mid Ulster’s key industries which are highly dependent on workers from overseas. Mid Ulster, with its private sector driven economy and lower average salaries would be penalised heavily. Rather than a one-size fits all approach, it is important that a regional sensitive approach to immigration and salary thresholds is adopted given Northern Ireland’s unique set of economic circumstances and employment challenges facing local businesses.</p> <p>Council’s Consultation response attached (Appendix 4) had to be submitted by 5th November 2019 before the consultation period ended, however, if any Councillor has further comments they wish to add, these can be forwarded as an addendum.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme Up to £8,000 per consortium member for 5G co-ordination, stakeholder engagement and bid development assisted through Consultancy support.</p>

	<p>Officer time to assist with coordination and with the co-ordination of 5G activity in general.</p> <p>Women in Business Report on 'Yes You Can' Programme – Year 1 Year 2 contribution of £6,060 provided for within economic development budget 2019/20.</p>
	Human: Officer time
	Risk Management:
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme Having considered the proposal, it is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme Beneficiaries may be local businesses and residents and if 5G funding is secured a rural proofing report will be conducted.</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <p>Rural Connected Communities 5G Testbed Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve that the FFNI Operations Team carry out a comprehensive and detailed report analysing the risks and benefits of 5G roll out, considering all available evidence and information on behalf of all Consortium Members. • Approve that the FFNI Operations team continue to engage with key stakeholders to develop materials for a bid, working with Consortium members in preparation for future 5G funding. • Approve that Mid Ulster Council (like other consortium members) set aside a budget of up to £8,000 in its economic development budget for work associated with 5G co-ordination, stakeholder engagement and bid development assisted through Consultancy support as outlined in Appendix 1.
5.2	<p>Women in Business Report on 'Yes You Can' Programme – Year 1 Approve release of Year 2 (2019/20) financial contribution of £6,060 for Women in Business and Note Year 1 'Yes You Can' Report (Appendix 2).</p>

5.3	Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI Approve Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI for signature and return (Appendix 3).
5.4	Consultation on proposed salary threshold – UK immigration system post-Brexit Retrospectively approve Council's formal response (Appendix 4) to the Migration Advisory Committee which had to be submitted by 5 th November 2019 before the consultation period ended. However, if any Councillor has further comments they wish to add, these can be forwarded as an addendum.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	<p>Appendix 1 - 5G Presentation at FFNI Steering Group - 11 Oct 2019</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Women in Business Year 1 (2019/20) 'Yes You Can' Report</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Data Sharing Agreement with Invest NI</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Draft Consultation Response on proposed salary threshold – UK immigration system post- Brexit</p>