

Report of the Corporate Director of Support Services

to
Cabinet

On

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Telecommunications Installations on Council Premises and Land

**Economic & Environment Scrutiny Committee – Executive Councillor: Councillor
Moring**

A Part 1 - Public Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To agree a revised Council policy on the installation of telecommunications equipment on Council premises, taking into account the comments made at pre-Cabinet Scrutiny (Minute 314 of Economic & Environment Scrutiny Committee, 20 September 2012 refers).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council supports the furtherance of the Wifi city and other initiatives which encourage economic development through the use of new technology.
- 2.2 That the Council adopts the policy on the installation of telecommunications equipment on Council premises outlined in section six of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Digital Revolution has seen the steady move away from analog and electronic technology to the digital age, with the development of the digital electronic computer, the personal computer, digital cameras and personal music players. Equally important has been the development of transmission technologies including computer networking, the Internet and digital broadcasting. 3G phones, whose social penetration grew exponentially in the 2000s, has played a large role in the digital revolution as they provide pervasive entertainment, communications, and on-line connectivity.
- 3.2 In 2005 the population of the Internet reached 1 billion and 3 billion people worldwide used mobile phones by the end of the decade. UK wide television broadcasting is currently also transitioning from analog to digital signal.
- 3.3 The link between mobile devices and internet websites via "social networking" have become a standard in digital communication. By 2010, 2 billion people used the Internet, twice the number using it in 2005. Cloud computing entered the mainstream in the early 2010s. By 2015, tablet computers and phones are expected to exceed personal computers in Internet usage.

- 3.4 The Government's ambition is to have the best broadband connectivity in Europe by 2015 with 90% of the population being able to access Superfast Broadband and the remainder receiving substantially improved broadband at no less than speeds of 2mgps.
- 3.5 The Council has long identified the need to wirelessly enable the borough as more businesses look to make services more accessible via mobile Apps and the internet, for example, in relation to retail, banking, travel, entertainment, government services and Google Maps. This includes addressing existing 'black spots' which is key to maintaining and attracting business activity and significant investment in the borough.
- 3.6 The future economic, social and educational well-being of Southend will be dependent on taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital age and ever developing new technologies. There is a direct economic impact of the offer for existing Southend based businesses, but it will also provide valuable connectivity for potential relocating businesses in areas of business development such as the Airport and adjoining business park.
- 3.7 The coverage currently available will, however, restrict the future use of wireless technologies for staff and schools working in the borough, and with the planned use of wireless for employees to work nomadically, impede the New Ways of Working project and the corporate vision to deliver services to the community.
- 3.8 The Council has already recognised the digital age by approving the wi-fi enablement of the Civic Centre, as part of its overall refurbishment to meet new working techniques and all councillors' homes also now have access to wi-fi connection as part of this programme.
- 3.9 Southend is part of the successful national Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) funding bid that has secured £6.4m to wirelessly enable, primarily rural, areas across greater Essex for better connectivity. Whilst this does not benefit urban Southend directly, it will provide valuable infrastructure to ensure appropriate connectivity for London Southend Airport and the surrounding business and industrial areas (including the proposed airport business park and Med Tech park) which are located within the rural area of Rochford. This e-development is likely to need to be facilitated from Southend.
- 3.10 In addition, the Council needs to maximise the opportunities afforded by externally funded projects such as the ReallySmartHouse project - a £1.2m retrofit of up to 45 council owned properties with energy saving interventions.
- 3.11 The information gathered from these homes will be received in the Civic Centre via a low power transmitter/receiver using a wireless signal from the properties. This will regularly monitor the energy and intervention changes and how successful they have been.

3.12 The Council is in a good position to learn from other councils in the siting and configuration of telecommunications equipment, particularly with regard to particular locations and to aesthetics to avoid unsightly equipment detracting from the environment.

4. Current position

4.1 The Council's current policy is multi-faceted, and somewhat contradictory, with limitations, set in 2000, on the siting of telecommunications equipment on Council buildings but (following amendment in 2001) general agreement to the siting of such equipment on land alongside highways and footpaths across the borough. Development and usage of telecommunications technology has changed considerably since the Council last considered and set its policy. The current policy base will increasingly restrict the Council's ability to promote and support economic, social and educational growth and opportunity and may make the local economy less competitive.

4.2 Many other local authorities across the UK appear to be more advanced in their response to the increased need for connectivity and revised their policies during the last decade. A few examples include Milton Keynes, Poole, Newport, Hertfordshire, Cambridge and Suffolk councils. This leaves Southend at a disadvantage as a destination for economic and business investment.

5.0 Health considerations

5.1 The Department of Health published information in September 2005 entitled Mobile Phones and Health. The guidance and recommendations contained in this publication was based on information provided by a range of agencies. The primary evidence came from a Government report published in May 2000, by a group of independent experts led by Sir William Stewart the Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government at the time. The Stewart report stated: "The balance of evidence indicates that there is no general risk to the health of people living near base stations, on the basis that exposures are expected to be small fractions of guidelines" (guidelines published on exposure to radio frequency emissions from mobile phones and phone masts).

5.2 The Department of Health published a companion leaflet to the guidance entitled Mobile Phones Base Stations and Health at the same time. This leaflet was updated in March 2011 and still states there is no clear evidence of adverse health effects from the use of mobile phones or from mobile phone base stations. It does, however, suggest further research should be carried out to investigate whether there might be longer term effects.

5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that local planning authorities should not determine health safeguards if the proposal 'meets International Commission guidelines for public exposure'. It also states that applications for telecommunications development should include, for an addition to an existing mast or base station, a statement that self-certifies that the cumulative exposure 'will not exceed International Commission on non-ionising radiation protection guidelines'

- 5.4 The ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) is an independent, not for profit body of scientific experts established by the International Radiation Protection Association whose principal aim is to disseminate information and advice on the potential health hazard of exposure to non-ionising radiation including electromagnetic fields.
- 5.5 ICNIRP has developed guidelines on exposures to Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMFs) which are designed to provide protection against all known health effects from EMFs. The guidelines are the result of an extensive process of expert review of the scientific literature and consultation with other experts and professional bodies. In 1998 the ICNIRP issued guidelines on exposures levels for EMF's for the frequency range up to 300 GHz and have subsequently updated their guidance. An affirmation statement was made by ICNIRP in 2009 confirming that the radiofrequency guidelines issued in 1998 remained fit for purpose.
- 5.6 The National Planning Policy Framework 2012, which states that 'In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including telecommunications and high speed broadband', also states that applications for telecommunications development should include the outcome of consultations 'where a mast is to be installed near a school or college'.
- 5.7 Southend's Director of Public Health has confirmed that she concurs with the above assessment.

6. **Policy and Procedure for the installation of telecommunication equipment on Council premises and land**

- 6.1 The purpose of the policy is to set out the Council's approach for the installation of telecommunication equipment on Council premises and land.
- 6.2 This policy replaces previous Council policy, on the installation of telecommunication equipment on Council premises and land agreed in 2000 and 2001.
- 6.3 The policy supports the promotion of a positive economic, social and educational environment that benefits the people, businesses and other organisations of Southend and those with a connection, or those who wish to have a connection, to the borough.
- 6.4 The policy seeks to bring the Council in line with the policy of other local authorities so as not to disadvantage the borough in relation to competitiveness and attracting people and business.
- 6.5 The policy supports the Council's aims for a Safe, Healthy and Prosperous borough and supports the following Council Corporate Priorities:
- Encourage the prosperity of Southend and its residents
 - Enable well-planned quality housing and developments that meet the needs of Southend's residents and business.

- Ensure a well maintained and attractive street scene, parks and open spaces.
- Where possible minimise our impact on the natural environment
- Reduce inequalities and increase the life chances of people living in Southend.

6.6 The policy complements other Council policies and strategies including:

- The Council's ICT Strategy
- The Asset Management Strategy

6.7 In particular, the policy supports:

- A wireless enabled borough;
- The elimination of remaining 'dead spots' in the borough;
- Mobile and home working by council and other employees;
- The Government's ambition to have the best broadband connectivity by 2015;
- Connectivity for business and industrial areas – including London Southend Airport, the airport business and Med Tech park, and
- The ability of the Council to take advantage of externally funded projects which require or promote wireless connectivity.

6.8 Decisions on the installation of telecommunications equipment on Council premises and land will be taken in line with normal council procedures regarding estate management functions and appropriate consultation.

6.9 Asset Management considerations will need to be taken into account in respect of a proposed installation to ensure there are no proposals, such as future development, that could be adversely affected by the use of the site for telecommunication equipment.

6.10 The Council will permit telecommunications equipment to be located on Council premises and land, subject to compliance with paragraphs (a)-(e) below and provided all necessary planning and building control consents have been obtained.

- (a) The telecommunications operator is to obtain all necessary statutory consents required in respect of the proposed installation.
- (b) The telecommunications operator must demonstrate that the proposed installation will not damage the property or land on which the equipment is to be installed.
- (c) The telecommunications operator must provide relevant documentation that is required to comply with all health & safety requirements, including compliance with the International Commission for Non-ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines with regard to emissions exposure.
- (d) Operators of the telecommunications equipment should, where they propose to install equipment on or near to a school or college, consult

them before proceeding with a proposal or submitting an application for approval, in line with national planning policy. A school is considered to include day nurseries and nursery schools.

- (e) The operator will be responsible for obtaining satisfactory public liability insurance, keeping the site and apparatus in good and tenable repair, the installation of a separate electricity supply and the payment of any rates in connection with the use.

7. Other options

- Maintain the current policy adopted in 2000 and 2001. This would disadvantage the borough, in limiting the economic, social and educational opportunities for the borough - as outlined in sections three and four of this report.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 The current Council policy on the installation of telecommunication equipment on council premises is now over a decade old and is contradictory and restrictive. The technology, usage, knowledge of the impact have all changed considerably since the policy was adopted and with other organisations installing equipment on non-Council owned buildings, it has become self-defeating. The policy is, therefore, no longer tenable and needs to be revised.

9. Corporate Implications

9.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

By embracing the opportunities that new technology offers the Council can enhance the provision of local community facilities and services and promotes sustainable communities by encouraging home working, reducing need for travel, staying in touch, accessing wider range of business and services or enhancing their leisure time.

9.2 Financial Implications

- Reconsideration of the policy will enable the mobile working offer to increase, including within the Council itself;
- The success of funding for the ReallySmartHouse project indicated opportunities for energy efficiencies through supported technology;
- Participation in the BDUK funded project would encourage an enhanced partnership with Rochford District Council on enhanced localised provision.
- A review may provide additional income opportunities for the Council.

9.3 Legal Implications - None specific

9.4 People Implications

Enhancing the connectivity of the borough will have a positive impact on the ability of staff to work remotely and more effectively through the use of interactive mobile technology – reducing the need for staff to return to the Civic Centre to upload visit/incident information. In addition, the

independence of those individuals or families who are isolated or house-bound will be improved.

9.5 Property Implications

The Council presently has installations in 3 locations in the Borough. These are on the roofs of Longbow, Bewley Court and Beaver Tower. Leases were granted on these sites before the adoption of the existing policy in April 2000.

One school in Southend, Shoeburyness High, also already has a telecom mast situated on its premises.

9.6 Consultation

This paper has been previously considered by the Economic & Environmental Scrutiny Committee (on 20.9.12) as part of pre-Cabinet scrutiny, with the Committee expressing the view that the report could usefully contain more detail of the health implications of telecommunication equipment and that any new policy should have regard to the ICNIRP guidelines, re the siting of equipment (particularly in respect of school sites).

This feedback has been reflected in the final report.

Appropriate consultation will be undertaken where planning permission applies to the siting of proposed telecommunications equipment and in relation to schools.

9.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

9.8 Risk Assessment

The Health Protection Agency advise that 'exposures from Wi-Fi equipment are much less than from mobile phones, and are well within international guidelines. The findings from the research into WIFI technology suggests there does not appear to be a need to advise schools or others, to discontinue use of the technology.

9.9 Value for Money - None specific

9.10 Community Safety Implications None specific

9.11 Environmental Impact

The Telecommunications equipment on Council Property agreed in 2000 only applies to council controlled buildings and not Southend highways.

10. Background Papers

- ICNIRP Guidelines on exposures levels for EMF's for the frequency range up to 300 GHz.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

11. Appendices

None