

Pilley Community Broadband Meeting Minutes – 20150225

Panel

Roger Bell – Chair (Pilley Resident)

Oliver Moore – Speaker (Pilley Resident)

Martin Wilkinson – (Bull Hill Resident)

Colin Brookes FOB local funding manager (OpenReach)

Andy Snelgrove national director for FOB (OpenReach)

Robin Nicholas FOB project manager (OpenReach)

Graham Blomfield - BT operations manager for New Forest (Sway resident)

Summary

Approximately 70 residents in attendance.

Oliver Moore presented the benefits of enhanced broadband and why the Hampshire County Council (HCC) scheme may miss Pilley.

Colin Brookes OpenReach presented the plan for the improved infrastructure; explaining that the route would pass Battramsley so we should engage the community there to see if they want to participate.

OpenReach presented a revised quote including Battramsley of £54,168 + VAT. Also highlighted the risk of Pilley being overlooked by the HCC scheme.

Open Q&A with panel and meeting attendees. Details below.

Actions

- Residents to supply phone numbers for testing if they have concerns over the speeds they would receive under the proposed scheme
- OpenReach to confirm if Church Lane could be connected to the proposed 11/2 cabinet at opposite Burnt House Lane.
- OpenReach to confirm if houses in Shirley Holms are served by Battramsley cabinet (11/3)
- Pilley BB scheme committee to engage with Battramsley community to see if there is sufficient demand to fund a cabinet as the fibre run will go past this community.
- Pilley BB scheme committee to schedule follow up meeting with Pilley and Battramsley (if sufficient support) to start fund raising. Targeted for late May to allow time for other actions to complete.

Detailed Minutes

Oliver Moore provided an overview of the benefits enhanced broadband could provide, touching on issues such as download speed, video streaming and calls, increased saleability of houses, small

business benefits etc. Also covered the Hampshire County Council Scheme to cover 95% population in Hampshire with plans targeted to be available in September 2015. Highlighted risks that Pilley could be excluded or only partially included.

Colin Brookes (OpenReach) presented an overview of OpenReach, highlighting that OpenReach is responsible for the network infrastructure only and that BT retail is a separate organisation who supply subscribers with broadband. Some further details on the different technologies (ADSL, FTTC, FTTP) were presented.

The proposed scheme would take between 9-12 months to initiate from payment of 50% of the quote.

Fibre infrastructure is currently at cabinet 11 at Ampress roundabout.

Maps provided of proposed fibre route, running from Ampress (cabinet 11) to Battramsley (cabinet 11/3), using existing ducting for Hill House School to come down Rope Hill, via Tweed Lane and over the Shallows to Pilley Hill (cabinet 11/1). Then run fibre up to proposed new cabinet 11/2 opposite Burnt House Lane.

Upgraded/new cabinets proposed at:

- Battramsley (11/3) – New combined cabinet: phone and fibre
- Pilley Hill (11/1) – Add new fibre cabinet
- Opposite Burnt House Lane (11/2) – New combined cabinet: phone and fibre

OpenReach highlighted the risk that cabinets that do not exist today (such as the proposed 11/2 at Burnt House Lane) may be missed from HCC models, meaning only partial if any coverage for Pilley.

OpenReach explained that the route the copper cable takes is different from the proposed fibre route. This is because the new fibre route is more cost effective, using existing infrastructure.

Each cabinet will receive its own fibre capable of running at 1 Gbps with spare cable for adding capacity if needed.

OpenReach presented a revised quote including Battramsley of £54,168 + VAT. Also explained that this is not the total cost of the work and that OpenReach also contributes at a rate based on the number of upgraded premises that can receive the new service. This is called the gap funding model. As Pilley is over 350 premises, this contribution is at the highest rate. The real cost of doing the work is approximately £100,000. OpenReach expect to recover their costs over a 15 year period based on ISPs reselling the infrastructure they provide.

The contract for the works would be between OpenReach and the community. The work would start on receipt of 50% of the quote and be enabled at payment of the remaining 50%.

After installation, OpenReach will work very closely with the community to make sure the new infrastructure achieves the expected speeds and individual issues are ironed out.

Question and Answer

Q. Why don't OpenReach fund this themselves?

A. OpenReach had a commitment with the UK Government to cover 66% of the population. They are also required to match local council funding when implementing council schemes (e.g. HCC put in £100 million, OpenReach contribute a similar amount).

Open Reach's current commitment is approximately £2 billion to the government and £800 million to councils).

OpenReach also have a gap funding model where if communities implement improvement schemes, OpenReach has to contribute to the total cost. The community effectively pays for the non-commercial elements of the scheme. The cost of a cabinet conversion is around £20 k, new cabinets £40k so the total bill for the proposed scheme is approximately £100 k of which the community funds £55 k + VAT.

Q. If only 1/3 of the community contribute, will all of the community benefit? Can access be restricted to those who contribute?

A. OpenReach cannot limit access once the infrastructure is in place. This is because they are separate from the retailers who sell the broadband to end subscribers. Pilley needs to take a community minded view and work out the best and fairest way of achieving the funding required. There might be people who save on not having satellite, less car travel etc) who may contribute more.

Q. Where does the line divide properties that will be served from the 11/2 cabinet?

A. Properties to the east of Burnt House Lane and Burnt House Lane itself will be served by the 11/2 cabinet.

Q. Where will the new cabinet servicing Bull Hill be located?

A. The new cabinet will be located by the Pilley sign at the layby opposite Burnt House Lane

Q. Where does the current copper from Brunt House Lane to Bull Hill run so we can estimate distances?

A. The main copper feed follows the main road before being distributed off to the various connecting lanes.

Q. What is the technical limit for the distance the copper cable run from a cabinet?

A. The normal limit is approximately 1.6 km (1 mile) though sometimes can be further.

Q. Is there an impact on house prices? 5% increases had been heard.

Tom Cable, an audience member from Haywood Fox estate agents commented that improved broadband is unlikely to add value to your property, but will make it more saleable and is increasingly seen as an essential. Having better broadband speed would widen the market for your property.

Q. How are houses with long drives impacted?

The distance from the cabinet includes all of the cabling running from the cabinet to your house. If you have a long drive, this should be included in any distance calculations. OpenReach assume you are within 50 m of the distribution point (DP) when doing outline estimates. If you are concerned, pass your phone number to Oliver Moore who will coordinate checking them with OpenReach.

Q. Why can't we use the HCC funding program?

The HCC program is designed to cover 95% of the Hampshire population, it doesn't care where the houses are – it just wants to get the most coverage for the money available. They might find houses easier to do than Pilley or only do the existing infrastructure, missing out on Bull Hill etc. For cabinets like the proposed 11/2 near Burnt House Lane, if it doesn't exist the model might miss it or cover estimate the cost to implement it; leading to Pilley being dropped in favour of cheaper and easier areas.

Q. Why do we have to pay up front rather than a subscription?

The funding is paid direct to OpenReach as they provide the infrastructure. There's no mechanism for the service providers (e.g. BT, Sky, TalkTalk etc.) who deal with end subscribers to pass money back to OpenReach on a per premise basis.

Q. Why can't we run fibre all the way top Bull Hill? Where does it stop?

The fibre stops at the cabinet, which for Bull Hill is near Burnt House Lane. There's no ducting infrastructure to Bull Hill. Moving fibre closer to Bull Hill would be very expensive as it would require a new duct in the road.

Q. Will the copper cable be upgraded as well?

The current cable is not substandard; it's just cable from the 1940s. There will be no replacement cabling as part of this scheme. When moving to similar schemes, OpenReach have observed much better stability as there's not 350 people trying to get data down the same copper connection.

Q. Is the distance a property is from the DP important?

A. Yes. OpenReach assume premises are within 50 m of a DP when doing initial assessments. The real distance is from the cabinet to the premises. Depending on the distance involved, a few people in Bull Hill could have low speeds (5MB was mentioned). Alternatively, they have seen 20MB at 1800m from a cabinet.

Q. Residents on Church Lane will connect to the cabinet at Pilley Hill. Does this mean the distance is too far for good speeds?

A. OpenReach will look at whether the whole of Church Lane could be connected to the proposed cabinet near Burnt House Lane (11/2) to reduce the distance and improve speeds.