

Ashendon Village Meeting – BT Group and Openreach – 21-5-2018

The purpose of this meeting was to provide the village with a full explanation of the progress made, issues arising and receive information regarding the plans to complete the Broadband installation for Ashendon and Pollicott. This was an open meeting and questions from the floor were welcomed. The meeting was, as far as possible, discouraged from going back over 'old ground', the intention was for this meeting to focus on a way forward to resolve the situation we find ourselves in.

This document details the key points raised covered in the meeting (LH column) and then added the BT Group or Openreach response to comments and questions raised that are relevant to the point raised (RH column). Comments and questions were not necessarily raised consecutively to the key point. *italics* I have added my comments that I chose not to divert the meeting with but that BT Group/Openreach should be aware of and that we would like to discuss in a further meeting (*in italics*).

Key Point	Response to Village Comments and Questions
<p>Giles Ellerton – BT Group Regional Director opened the meeting with an apology to the Ashendon community for not delivering Superfast Broadband to Ashendon, as contracted, by the 17th March 2018.</p> <p>Giles explained that civil engineering in rural areas can be problematic and, in this particular project that is the case.</p> <p>The contract is a fixed price contract between Connecting Ashendon CIC and BT Group. It is the responsibility of BT Group to deliver a solution that will enable Superfast Broadband in Ashendon.</p> <p>At the point of contract BT Group and Openreach expected the project to be completed within 12 months.</p> <p>Giles confirmed that completion of our project is a priority for Openreach.</p> <p>BT Group do not believe they are in breach of contract but recognise they have a contractual obligation to fulfil the project.</p>	<p>It was acknowledged that our very small community had paid the first instalment of £32,892 to BT using monies raised from households, local organisations and fundraising efforts by our children and local pub.</p> <p>It was noted that we had raised this money in a very short time because, as advised by BT, we needed to sign the contract within the deadline for Better Broadband Vouchers* or lose the £31,500 these vouchers will contribute to the second payment due on completion of the project. <i>* the scheme was due to end in March 2018 but later extended to December 2018.</i></p> <p>Q. What about compensation? E.g. People have incurred ongoing costs with high cost broadband solutions offering faster broadband than current BT <0.5MBS A. We are focussed on delivery of your Broadband. When the installation is complete you can have a conversation with your Connection Provider. <i>(This is an unsatisfactory response – the CP have not caused the costs we are currently experiencing and many residents do not use current BT services.)</i></p>
<p>Andy Burrows – Openreach Regional Manager also opened with an apology for the delay and explained that they were not quick enough to realise the plan & design for the installation had been wrong.</p>	

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<p>Andy Burrows explained that the plan was to bring the fibre through underground ducting for 1.2km up the hill from Gypsy Bottom into Ashendon. Planning was desk based using plans and records that indicated this was feasible. Site testing completed much later in the project found the ducts were congested with copper wiring and therefore unusable.</p> <p>Replacement ducting will cost £140,000 which is not commercially viable so Openreach had to return to planning & design to develop an alternative solution.</p>	<p>Q. Why, having stated that civil engineering in rural areas is complex, did Openreach rely on desk planning? Response: Acknowledgement they got it wrong and again an apology.</p>
<p>Andy Burrows explained the alternative permanent solution is to bring the fibre into Ashendon on poles. The work will be completed by internal labour and completed by the end of September 2018.</p> <p>In fact the only cost effective way to install in rural areas is to run cable on poles.</p>	<p>Comment: The quote is for underground service and now there is going to be overhead cables. Response: The quote was to provide a service. We have a cost target vs. adequate service and costed on a fixed quote to provide the service.</p> <p>Q. If the only cost effective way is poles, why didn't you plan this in the first place? A. Because a duct existed. <i>(The risk of duct being blocked was raised with Jane Darley and Rhona Weekes in December by Sian Miller when Twyford were experiencing the same problem – we were advised there was no problem with ours and our installation would be on 17th March as planned).</i></p> <p>Q. How many poles will be required? A. 18</p> <p>Q. Will you need planning permission to do this? A. NO</p> <p>Q. What about high winds – will we lose service? A. We have no stats on overhead reliability but if lines snap the Communications Providers must contact Openreach to repair.</p> <p>Comment: <i>(Les Curtis)</i> - poles are a disgrace. Response: This is the cost effective solution – it involves carriageway works to replace ducting.</p>

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<p>The discussion continued regarding the use of poles.</p>	<p>Q. Can you get a wayleave from the land owners to put duct through fields? A. Willing to discuss if village can provide contacts. <i>(Les Curtis is happy for Openreach to make contact – Sian will pass on contact details).</i></p> <p>Comment: The village Community Led Plan (CLP) highlighted how highly valued our views are – 18 poles will clutter a clear view across the valley. Please can we at least discuss other options? Response: We are willing to explore other options – the solution must be cost effective.</p> <p>Q. If poles are installed can you put them on the side of the road that will least impact the view. A. We will consider that.</p> <p>The overall consensus is that poles are not acceptable.</p>
<p>Andy Burrows explained that to minimise delay a temporary solution will be provided in the interim period. This will involve laying fibre on hedges and into soft verges. This will provide a service from end June in Ashendon and end July (latest) in Pollicott.</p>	<p>Q. Why the further delay for Upper Pollicott? A. Further work is needed to change the cabling on the cabinet and for that traffic management is required – this takes up to 6 weeks to arrange. If the community can help to reduce this time that would be appreciated (Sian Miller has already contacted Jimmy Wells, Senior Streetworks Technician, Roadspace Management Team, Transport for Buckinghamshire 07809 198 666) gave Andy Burrows the email reply and suggested he contacts Jimmy.</p> <p>Q. What risks exist for the solution? A. Communication Providers don't reply within the 28 day lead time (28 days is average). <i>(If 28 days is average could it go on for longer?).</i></p>
<p>The Village raised the issue of poor copper connections within the network. And asked Openreach to survey the copper connecting from poles in the village to homes.</p> <p>Andy Burrows explained that testing is completed close to the cabinet at nodes/intervention points using a meter. The cabinets will not be signed off if the speeds are not as expected. Cabinet 10</p>	<p>Q. Surely the copper testing out of cabinet is not the same as testing the connection to the home. A. The copper will work BUT If when you have broadband installed the speeds are not as expected you must contact your Communication provider who will contact Openreach to arrange repair. <i>(We do not feel our concerns have been listened to and your own engineers have advised householders that copper is in poor condition on the distribution poles</i></p>

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<p>copper testing at intervention points close to the cabinet using a meter has passed. Cabinet 11 testing is still to be completed.</p>	<p><i>and on homes – they have explained that there is no point fixing this until Broadband speeds improve as fixing now won't improve the currently low speeds significantly enough to be worth the effort. We would like a quality check done before we take up the solution and find that we are still unable to get superfast (or even superslow) broadband).</i></p> <p>Q. Will temporary solution give us the same performance? A. YES</p> <p>Q. Will temporary solution be robust/vulnerable? A. It is the same as the permanent solution without permanent fix. <i>(I am not sure this answers the vulnerability question i.e. could someone steal the cabling?)</i></p>
<p>Verges</p>	<p>Comment: Damage to the verges is unacceptable. Response: We will liaise with contractors regarding repair.</p> <p>Comment: Upper Pollicott verges were repaired very well following electric work, but then further work caused traffic to be forced onto the verges and the damage has not been repaired. Response: We will liaise with contractors regarding repair. <i>(There is no point repairing until all work is complete – please ask contractors to do their work at the end of the project).</i></p>
<p>Project Management</p>	<p>Q. Can we have a copy of your programme and weekly updates following your project meetings.</p> <p>A. That would not be practical. Sian has received regular updates from Jane and Judith. <i>(I have received updates when I have pushed for them – I would welcome a pro-active regular communication from you)</i></p> <p>Q. Can we have a weekly update on progress and actions? A. That is quite an imposition on your team – I am sure Sian would find that too hard to manage <i>(SM – I would welcome this and will have no issue taking updates)</i></p>

Work Schedule:

The following outlines our understanding of the planned actions and deliverables. It would be useful to have dates advised for the unknown dates.

Activity	Due Date (all 2018)
150m Soft Dig for temporary solution fibre	25 th May
Cabinet 10 (East Farm) Lights	25 th May
Cabinet 10 Communication Providers identifiable	25 th May
Cabinet 10 Cable and Jointing	1 st June
Cabinet 10 pre-commissioned and ready	1 st June
Verify circuits and live to live migration via CP's of all existing customers to new services	1-30 th June
All other customers can order	30 th June
Cabinet 11 (Upper Pollicott) Lights	25 th May
Cabinet 11 Communication Providers identifiable	?
Cabinet 11 Cable and Jointing	?
Cabinet 11 pre-commissioned and ready	?
Verify circuits and live to live migration via CP's of all existing customers to new services	?
All other customers can order	31 st July

Next Steps: Sian Miller has requested a meeting between Ashendon CIC/Working Party, Les Curtis, Giles and Andy – dates to be proposed).