Item 6a

AT A MEETING
- of the
3G TELECOMMUNICATION WORKING GROUP
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Monday 21 November 2005 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Ayshea Johnson (Lead Member)
Councillor Louise Harrison
Councillor Ian Shires
Councillor Marco Longhi (Portfolio Holder)

OFFICERS PRESENT

David Elsworthy
Debbie Breedon
Mr Peter Murray (British Telecom Wholesale)

The lead member introduced members to Mr Peter Murray and explained that Mr Murray had been invited to attend the meeting to give a brief presentation and respond to member's questions and clarify matters within the presentation.

Mr Peter Murray, Regional Partnership Director for Microconnect Partnership Programme part of British Telecom Warehouse Division gave a presentation. The presentation covered key areas: -

- The wireless world - mobile technologies are transforming the way we live, work and communicate.
- The wireless future – new 3G services as key drivers in the wireless revolution.
- What does this mean for local authorities – framework for investment, strengthen the economic environment, safer environment through improved communications, reducing digital exclusion, wired for the future, delivery and E & M government objectives.
- BT's microconnect distributed antennae.
- Microconnect in context.
- How does it work – remote antennae points.
- ODPM code of best practice on mobile phone network development.
- Summary of the presentation detailing the following: -
    - An innovative approach utilising existing street furniture to accommodate a complimentary shared wireless infrastructure for mobile operators in the city centre.
    - Sensitive to the stringent planning issues in that even that the most challenging sites.

- Partnership approach – BT working closely with local authorities and mobile phone operators to address coverage and particularly capacity requirements.
- Open consultative process adhering to MOA ten commitments.
- Future proof flexibility to respond to GSM and 3G requirements.

Following the presentation there was a question and answer session, the table below reflects the key questions and responses.

Question	Answer
The local authority does not own the street lighting infrastructure in Walsall Borough Council. Will you deal directly with Amey?	British Telecom will not contract directly with Amey PFI. British Telecom would require the council to talk to Amey.
Who would maintain the street furniture and how would communications between the two work in practice?	If Amey were maintaining the street furniture there would have to be a mechanism in place to notify British Telecom so that customers in turn can be notified of any break in services.
If street lights are out of the question would it be possible to install microconnect to illuminated street signage?	Amey PFI also look after the signs in addition to the street lamps.
What would Walsall MBC's role be?	Walsall Council would need to express an interest; once an interest had been expressed British Telecom would be able to negotiate with mobile phone operators to establish a need for this facility within Walsall Town Centre. It maybe that there is not a requirement at this time and that coverage is adequate.
What is the driver for Walsall?	As set out in the presentation the framework for investment will strengthen the local economy. It will make a safer environment through improved communications reducing digital exclusion and assist in the delivery of E & M government objectives. In addition Walsall would be looking at a shared solution of who looks after equipment and who manages it with the PFI contractor Amey.
What are the financial benefits to Walsall Council of installing microconnect through street furniture?	There would be an annual fee of £1,000 per structure and no maintenance cost to the council. The group was advised that the existing infrastructure is adapted to facilitate microconnect through existing structures.

Question	Answer
How often would the structures be updated or replaced?	Once installed microconnect would not need to be replaced and no consent is needed to install a microconnect structure.
Why British Telecom? Are there any other companies that can offer the same service?	It is unique to British Telecom at this time, not an exclusion agreement; however, the objective is to use the council's existing infrastructure to supply a service. The only known similar service is in Glasgow supplied by NTL where new structures for each of the microconnect structure are being installed at this time.
Can the use of microconnect be rolled out to district centres in the borough?	That is not the case at this time; the microconnect facility is aimed at city centres and town centres with large structures where coverage is difficult to maintain. It is usual for semi-rural locations and rural locations to be serviced by telecommunication masts as BT fibre is not underground and in the cable channels.
If given permission to install microconnect, how soon would installation begin?	If permission is given by Walsall Council to proceed the next stage would be to contact mobile phone operators to see if they require coverage. If coverage is not required the structures will not be built.
Is there any interest from the operators at this time?	That will not been pursued until Walsall gives its intention to proceed.
Are there other national examples of microconnect being installed?	Yes, there are several ongoing projects, two live projects at this time being Chester and Cardiff.
Are there any other PFI's across the country entering into partnership arrangement with British Telecom?	No, not at this time.
How long would the agreement with British Telecom last?	The agreement would be for 8 years.
How many years of the Amey PFI project remaining?	Approximately 20 years.
How many sq km's in Walsall Town Centre would need to be covered by microconnect network?	Walsall Town Centre is approximately 2¼ sq km's.
How many units would be required to cover the town centre?	Approximately 10 units are required per 2 sq km's.
How long would installation take and to what cost to the town centre?	It is suggested that between 6 and 8 months would be required to install the units to the town centre and that 15 to 20 structures would be required.

Question	Answer
Would there be any disruption to the town centre?	It would be necessary to carry out roadwork's to install cabling but the roads would be put back in the same condition.
Will this mean that other telecom providers will refrain from applying for planning permission for telecom base stations within the networked area?	No, others can still apply.

There were no more questions at this time. Members thanked Mr Murray for his presentation and for responding to member's queries and clarifying matters with them.

Members gave consideration to the information received and highlighted the following points for further information: -

1. There is a need to determine who owns the lampposts and street furniture within the Walsall borough.
2. Would need to further consider the arrangements for a shared solution with the PFI.
3. Need to give further consideration why microconnect structures cannot be rolled out into district centres. This is of concern to members.
4. There is a need to look at other examples both completed and ongoing within town centres.
5. Is there really a need at this time for Walsall Council to disrupt the town centre when there may not be a demand by operators?
6. Concerns that telecommunication masts may still be constructed within the town centre, that micro connect is a complimentary method not a replacement for telecommunication masts.
7. Concerns about the length of agreement when other options have not been fully explored.

Actions from the meeting: -

1. That a representative of Amey be invited to the next meeting on the 15 December 2005 to discuss the proposal by BT Microconnect Partnership Programme.
2. That officer's carryout research on other regional installations and opportunities for other companies to offer a like service.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.20 p.m.