

**DATE: 23 February 2006**

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**3G WORKING GROUP – PROPOSAL TO ENTER A CONTRACT FOR THE  
INSTALLATION AND HOSTING OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT  
WITH BT**

**Ward(s) All**

**Portfolios:** Councillor Andrew – Regeneration  
Councillor M.G.Pitt – Housing and Community Safety  
Councillor Longhi – Environment and Transport

**Summary of report:**

The purpose of the report is to set out proposals to enable BT, in partnership with the council and its strategic partners, to establish an innovative new technology infrastructure; designed to stimulate the adoption and deployment of both emerging and traditional mobile technologies whilst limiting impact on the urban environment.

**Recommendations**

That the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that Cabinet proceed with a contract for the installation and hosting of telecommunications equipment subject to;

- All upfront legal and contract development costs being met by BT.
- All operational costs that the council and its lighting PFI partner (AMEY) may incur being met by BT.
- All additional risks being identified and managed through the contractual arrangements.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

- For Members to consider the possible benefits and barriers to the installation of an innovative new technology infrastructure and make recommendations to Cabinet.

**Resource and legal considerations:**

- The Council has appointed Scrutiny and Performance Panels to discharge the functions conferred by Section 21 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

**Citizen impact:**

- The role of scrutiny is to examine past, current and future initiatives and policies to ensure that the public has access to the best possible policies and services.

**Environmental impact:**

- Microconnect does not require planning permission to install.
- Street 'clutter' is a growing problem. Microconnect aims to address this issue by utilising existing street furniture – adapted in such a way as to be hard for the un-trained eye to detect.

**Performance and Risk management:**

- Officers have met with AMEY, legal and risk colleagues in order to determine the level of risk and other legal considerations.
- An initial assessment of risks has been undertaken covering such matters as; design & operational, third party liability, financial, contractual and legal matters and will be developed and progressed further as part of any contractual negotiations.
- The process, progress and performance of Microconnect will be managed through any contractual agreement.

**Equality Implications:**

- 3G technology offers opportunities to the Council to utilise the technology to promote its services, thus contributing further towards the ideals of e-Government.

**Vision:**

- The delivery of such a facility would place Walsall ahead of many similar authorities helping to boost the standing of the Council helping it to deliver the council's vision (8) in strengthening the local economy and (10) helping to transform Walsall into an excellent local authority.

**Consultation:**

- Members
- Planning and Environment officers
- Risk
- Legal
- AMEY (PFI)
- BT

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## **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out proposals to enable BT, in partnership with the council and its strategic partners, to establish an innovative new technology infrastructure; designed to stimulate the adoption and deployment of both emerging and traditional mobile technologies whilst limiting impact on the urban environment.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 3G mobile broadband represents a fundamental change in mobile communications. 61,000,000 mobile phone subscribers in the UK are now comfortable using mobile phones for voice and simple text messaging. 3G services will extend the power of broadband internet to the palm and significantly change the way in which we communicate.
- 2.2 Each of the five mobile operators has launched 3G services. They will now start to respond to their obligations to provide coverage and strengthen capacity where required. As demand increases for these new services, the requirement for additional antenna to provide this capacity will start to grow. This is true for 2G but is particularly of issue for the new 3G technology.
- 2.3 Microconnect is a complement rather than a replacement for existing and traditional mobile mast infrastructure. It is specially designed to provide capacity and coverage in dense urban areas. Whilst it is unlikely to replace the need for traditional macro and micro size masts, it should enable a response to community demands for more comprehensive mobile coverage through a shared and aesthetically sympathetic technology. It will enable Walsall to offer its commercial and business community's state of the art communications helping our offer to potential inward investing companies. It will also help with social inclusion and the delivery of 24/7 technologies to citizens and persons who have recourse to the town centre.
- 2.4 BT propose to use a number of the council's street lighting columns, street signs or CCTV columns to accommodate the antennae and the associated equipment to provide this service in Walsall town centre.
- 2.5 The Council will receive a payment to cover the cost of involvement in the project. At present, BT are proposing £1,000 per installation per year. Based on an anticipated 20 such installations the council would therefore receive approximately £20,000 as part of a maintenance and facilities contract. However, initial investigations indicate that this amount is insufficient to cover the council's and AMEY's liabilities. As Walsall has a contractual partnering arrangement with AMEY for the management of its street lighting officers will need to establish details of the risk and the contractual implications before entering into such an arrangement for Microconnect.
- 2.6 Microconnect antennas are the smallest telecommunication antenna equivalent to the industry standard picocell. Even at full capacity with several mobile operators and the maximum number of callers all using the system, the exposure at street level is typically 100 times below the level recommended by the established health and safety guidelines from ICNIRP (International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection) and ratified by WHO (World Health Organisation).