

Economy and Growth Committee

Date of Meeting:	30th November 2021
Report Title:	Digital Connectivity - Update
Report of:	Director of Growth and Enterprise
Report Reference No:	EG/06/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** Digital connectivity is now an essential utility for every home and business. Its importance has been underlined by the COVID-19 pandemic with home and remote working becoming the norm which has created a significant demand for digital services. While connectivity is a required enabler, usage of digital products, services and systems is also vital to economic success and social wellbeing. The necessity for connectivity and the drive to support uptake of digital services – particularly in the SME sector – have driven the case for greater focus on the ‘Digital Agenda’ by Cheshire East Borough Council.
- 1.2.** This report provides an overview of current activities, future projects and the challenges faced by CEC in achieving its digital ambitions. Specifically, it includes updates on:
 - Connecting Cheshire and the CEC Economic Development contribution to digital.
 - Funding & governance.
 - Connectivity picture across Cheshire East
 - Current connectivity deployment and digital support.
 - Cheshire East targets and aspirations.
 - Decisions needed for future projects

2. Recommendations

2.1. That the Economy and Growth Committee:

2.1.1. Notes the progress which has been made in relation to the delivery of digital and agrees that a further report be brought to the committee identifying progress and performance in Autumn next year.

2.1.2. Notes the development and pipeline of future projects.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. The report provides an update on current and potential future digital activities to provide background and context to any more specific decision requests submitted to the committee.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1. This report is an update and therefore no other options are applicable.

5. Background

Connecting Cheshire

5.1. The “**Connecting Cheshire Partnership**” was formally established following Cabinet approval in September 2012 (CE12/13-15) as a collaboration between Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Warrington, and Halton Borough Councils.

5.2. Its primary focus is on improving connectivity in the wider sub region, as an additional area it provided business support in digital areas. Cheshire East is the Lead and contracting Authority within the partnership, and is responsible for the management of funding agreements, supplier procurement and contracts. The other Local Authorities provide oversight to the Cheshire East’s day to day management of the programme.

5.3. The partnership has completed deployment of two major digital infrastructure and three business support projects. A major change occurred with the last Digital business support project, “Digital 2020” (2017-2020) in that a new ‘in-house’ team was created to deliver and manage the project, as opposed to the previous more contract management approach – during delivery this team was transferred from the Skills & Growth company and is now based in the Economic Development function.

5.4. The two infrastructure contracts have delivered across Cheshire East, the outputs identified in the following tables.

Fibre Cabinets	Fibre cabinets are local exchange cabinets that have been given fibre connectivity to enable Superfast over remaining copper premise connection.
Full Fibre	Full fibre is a fibre connection direct to a premise which will enable gigabit connectivity speeds.
Total Premises Impacted	These are the total number of premises that received a minimum of Superfast connectivity as a result of the deployments.

	Public Investment	Fibre Cabinets (premises impacted)	Full Fibre (premises impacted)	Total Premises Impacted
Contract 1	£17.15m	83,239	4,449	87,688
Contract 2	£7.61m	13,859	5,315	19,174

- 5.5.** Currently there is one programme in delivery by Connecting Cheshire, this is the “**Digital Cheshire**” project. This is an approximately £6m project that will provide gigabit capable connectivity to problem premises in both Cheshire East and Cheshire West areas, it also has a business support element for SMEs who can receive knowledge and consultancy-based support to enable them to utilise new digital processes and markets.
- 5.6.** Mobilisation and recruitment of all required staff for the Digital Cheshire project has proved challenging but the team in place have commenced delivery of the business support element and it is anticipated that the first ‘live’ premise to be connected will be delivered toward the close of 2021. The project is behind on outputs and forecast spend, so it is planned to be formally re-profiled with funder approval commencing November 2021.

Economic Development Team

- 5.7.** With the transfer of Connecting Cheshire delivery responsibility from the Skills & Growth Company back into the Council in August 2019, the Economic Development team is now the focus for digital activity within the Council. As an economic development team it is engaging with projects currently tied to business, the two functional digital activity themes are
- to provide connectivity solutions, and
 - digital support services to local businesses (such as knowledge and training).

Other aspects of Digital Agenda such as skills and digital support for residents are undertaken within the Adults, Health and Integration Directorate; Children’s Services; and access to Council services by the ICT team.

- 5.8.** While the current Digital Cheshire project is tied to business connectivity the rollout also includes connecting residential properties that are nearby SMEs or along the connectivity routes of the infrastructure rollout. In practice, the majority of the contracted premises are residential.
- 5.9.** The Council's Corporate Policy Committee is considering a report on its workplan on 2nd December 2021, covering Council's wider Digital Strategy, and the Economic Development Team will have a continued role under the key workstreams to be identified in that report of;
- Sustainable Digital Infrastructure, and
 - To create a vibrant Digital Economy
- Both these workstreams will be important in supporting both residents and businesses in our communities across the Borough.

Rural Action Plan

- 5.10.** Economy & Growth Committee considered a report on the Rural Action Plan on 16th September 2021, and the proposal to update the Action Plan for the term of 2022-2025.
- 5.11.** Digital Connectivity is an important issue for our rural communities and will be a key workstream within the emerging Rural Action Plan. The aspirations will be around delivering digital support to rural businesses, and to promote access to rural connectivity schemes such as Digital Cheshire, and also an ability to measure progress in connectivity.

Funding and Governance

- 5.12.** The prime area of internal funding for current and any future projects will derive from a Connecting Cheshire 'shared' fund that has derived primarily from previous projects via a mechanism called 'Gainshare'.
- 5.13.** On prior infrastructure rollouts if the level of customer take-up (premises subscribing to broadband) was above a certain level the supplier was required to make payments into a gainshare fund. These were effectively a repayment of subsidy to account for the increased commercial returns for above anticipated levels of take-up.
- 5.14.** The gainshare fund accrues over the terms of the first two contracts and the final value is yet to be confirmed, however the estimated value of the fund is expected to be just above £10m.
- 5.15.** The Gainshare fund is ring fenced for use on extending or further digital projects. Due to the complex original funding rules a majority of the fund would have to be repaid if not allocated to digital infrastructure or projects.
- 5.16.** The fund itself does not have any legal expiry date, however the fund does require ongoing reporting externally and notification of any usage. Although there is no expiry there is a requirement this will be majority allocated for usage over 2021-2025.
- 5.17.** The Digital Cheshire project has received external funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) – recently renamed The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). This is approx. £3m of funding and was from the final round of

ERDF calls, and post EU Transition is still subject to EU funding compliance and extensive audit & reporting requirements.

- 5.18. The focus of Government broadband infrastructure support is via BDUK (Building Digital UK). They also provided funding for the initial two deployment projects and will be a likely source of future funds.
- 5.19. Some funding has also been received from Innovate UK to support a digital accountancy project underway.

Connectivity Picture in Cheshire East

- 5.20. There are two key metrics for the measurement of connectivity (often in terms of lack of) with broadband. These are “**Superfast**” speeds which means speeds of at least 30Mbs – and “**Gigabit**” speeds which means speeds reaching or above 1000Mbs.
- 5.21. Premises with sub-Superfast (less than 30mbs) are a particular issue, with businesses and residents often heavily impacted by the poor speeds and sometimes unable to utilise digital services or make use of remote working – these premises were historically termed ‘**not-spots**’.
- 5.22. Current government focus in the last few years have moved to the issue of Gigabit connectivity with a target to ensure that 85% of UK premises will have access to gigabit-capable broadband by 2025.
- 5.23. While the impact of sub-Gigabit speeds on individual or businesses is not as severe as the sub-Superfast issue, the lack of Gigabit capability is viewed as a serious constraint on the usage and growth of digital within the nation. The enablement of widespread Gigabit capability considered a key component of driving productivity and economic growth and security.
- 5.24. The overall level of Superfast broadband coverage for Cheshire East as an Authority area is just over **96%** which is close to the England average of over **97%**. Given the rural nature of many parts of the area this is a positive figure that has been achieved through significant investment in infrastructure rollouts via the Connecting Cheshire programme.
- 5.25. Broadband data collected by the Council from suppliers in a 2020 open market review exercise indicate that remaining number of sub superfast connected premises that require a solution will be in the region of 9,500 (residential & commercial) following deployment of the Digital Cheshire programme - which will complete in early 2023. It is likely that this figure will reduce slightly due to commercial build in some areas.
- 5.26. The level of Gigabit coverage in Cheshire East is about **28%**, this figure however is significantly below the England average of over **40%**.
- 5.27. Prior to the current project the infrastructure, rollouts were intended only to achieve speeds above the Superfast threshold of 30mbs in their requirements. This enabled a lower cost per premise deployment and contributed to the success of the Superfast coverage figures. However, Gigabit coverage was not a significant outcome of the past deployments and the coverage that exists is centred on larger urban areas which have been considered higher value areas to commercial operators

Connection	Cheshire East Coverage	England Coverage
Superfast Broadband	96%	97%
Gigabit	28%	40%

5.28. The situation regarding 4G and 5G coverage is not clear as there is not enough information available, additionally government funding and support has historically been and is presently focused on fixed line solutions. There have been no significant wireless projects undertaken by Connecting Cheshire previously and there are currently no plans for activity in this area.

Current Connectivity Deployment

5.29. The current “**Digital Cheshire**” project is providing connectivity to premises in the area (infrastructure covering Cheshire East and Cheshire West).

5.30. The project has received ERDF funding from The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC – formerly MHCLG) and Cheshire East is the lead Authority. The project was approved at the close of 2020 and will run until 2023.

5.31. The total project has a cost of approximately £6 Million and will meet grant ‘output’ requirements set by DLUHC/MHCLG by having both an infrastructure and business support component - approximately £4.5m of the total will be spent directly on connectivity. The focus of the outputs is delivery to defined SMEs and the infrastructure component will target SME premises and subsequently benefitting surrounding residential properties located in the sub superfast speed locations.

5.32. The roll-out has a ‘contracted’ (target) output of just over 4,100 problem locations and the infrastructure will be a Gigabit speed fibre solution delivered by the supplier Airband.

5.33. The pattern of deployment was market driven to achieve the highest level of coverage for the available funding. A list of all problem and State Aid eligible premises in the Cheshire region were contained within the published tender and suppliers were asked to supply a model that provided the highest level of overall coverage from this list.

5.34. The current plan of deployment is heavily weighted within the Cheshire East area, this has driven Connecting Cheshire to investigate options to increase the coverage in other partner areas.

5.35. Despite the high proportion of coverage in Cheshire East, there are still many gaps in the coverage and a large geographic area that will not receive any deployment. It is expected that some more densely populated gap areas will receive a commercial (outside the contracted project) roll-out by Airband, where they are in close proximity to the contracted deployment - however the full extent is not yet known.

- 5.36.** Although there is a contracted target of 4,112 it is important to understand that this is just the threshold required for funding for premises that must be connected. It is expected that in terms of other premises on the various connected routes and via additional commercial build by Airband, there will be more than 35,000 premises with access to the new Gigabit network as a result - many of these with current speeds above the (Superfast) threshold for support, but still with relatively slow current speeds.

Digital Support for Business

- 5.37.** Digital Support as part of the Digital Cheshire programme augments the investments being made in infrastructure and physical connectivity as an effective way of maximising the benefits derived by businesses. This calls upon local experience of delivering targeted business support and direct engagement with SMEs.
- 5.38.** Core support will be provided by a series of demand led, intensive 'Masterclasses' and complimentary events. 'Intensive Support' (bespoke consultancy), which can span up to six months and provide a minimum 20 hours of assistance, will be available to 20 businesses investing in transformational ICT projects.
- 5.39.** The support provided is focused on SMEs, emphasising the need for innovation and competitive advantage within the area. It provides sufficient flexibility to meet varying levels of business requirements, whilst not duplicating existing provision or investments being made elsewhere by the public and private sectors.
- 5.40.** The delivery activity covers Cheshire and Warrington sub-Region. 'Beneficiaries' will all be eligible SME businesses located in the area and the majority of which will not have benefitted from any of the previous support schemes or interventions.
- 5.41.** Masterclass delivery will take place in each of the local authority areas to ensure maximum coverage and availability for beneficiaries to attend and network.

ADAPT Programme

- 5.42.** The Adoption of Digital Accounting and Payment Technology (ADAPT) programme is a local business support initiative provided to local SME businesses by Cheshire East Council and will provide an event and access to a knowledge portal for up to 200 SMEs.

6. Targets and Aspirations

Current Digital Targets

- 6.1.** The Corporate Policy Committee will meet on 3rd December 2021 and identified on its workplan is a report on the Council's wider Digital Strategy, and the Economic Development Team will have an important role and input into the delivery of actions within that Strategy and will seek to progress defined outputs and outcomes.

- 6.2.** In terms of published targets, the Council has set a target in its Corporate Plan 2021-2025 of achieving 100% Superfast access to all rural premises by 2025. Also stating an intention to 'improve connectivity for all our communities and help residents and business' and to ensure a 'Digital connectivity programme' is in place.
- 6.3.** The Digital Cheshire programme does have several contractual ('output') targets to be delivered according to a funder agreed profile and by the close of the project in 2023, these include:
- Overall connectivity to 4,112 premises (Airband target)
 - 440 SME businesses with new connectivity
 - 440 SME businesses taking up new broadband connectivity
 - 165 SME businesses receiving Digital Support
 - 10 New start SME businesses supported
 - 5 SME businesses supported to introduce new products
- 6.4.** The above output targets will be identified as performance targets for Economy & Growth Committee to review annually.

Digital Aspirations

- 6.5.** As covered in the Connectivity section, following a successful delivery of Digital Cheshire there may be as many as 9,500 problem sub-superfast speed premises requiring connectivity solutions. Additionally, the level of overall Gigabit coverage is likely to be still below the UK average.
- 6.6.** To provide solutions to these connectivity issues several potential projects and activities are being explored.

Voucher 'Top-up' Scheme

- 6.7.** The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) is providing up to £210m worth of voucher funding for those experiencing slow broadband speeds in rural areas. Vouchers worth up to £1,500 for residential homes and £3,500 for business premises are available to cover the costs of installing gigabit broadband. The scheme is administered via BDUK and it is known that from previous and the current scheme that uptake of vouchers by parties in Cheshire is below the national average.
- 6.8.** There is an additional 'Top-up' scheme that Local Authorities can apply to participate that uses local funding to increase the value of the vouchers further (in the case of the national voucher value being insufficient). Many LA's are now participating, as an example Shropshire Council provides an additional £3,500 to residential and £2,500 to SME's – meaning the maximum voucher value could be as high as £5,000 or £6,000 respectively.
- 6.9.** The Connecting Cheshire partnership is exploring options and mechanisms for a Cheshire region top-up voucher scheme, it is also considering whether it would be advantageous to have a dedicated resource to promote, manage and ensure best value of the top-up scheme. The general proposal has the support in principle of partners, but models are still under development and no formal agreements are in place.

Digital Cheshire/Airband Contract Extension

- 6.10.** The current Digital Cheshire Airband contract has a maximum value of £10m public subsidy but currently has a contracted value of approx. £4.75m which means there is 'headroom' space to extend the value (and scale of deployment) by approx. £5.25m. Recently BDUK have announced they have approximately £90m of national funding available that can be accessed by the remaining superfast contracts to extend their delivery. BDUK have invited Connecting Cheshire to apply for £2m of funding.

BDUK Procurements

- 6.11.** Although still in the early stages of development BDUK is planning to conduct several 'local area' deployments that may be beneficial in certain areas of CEC (and other partnership areas). These look to be infrastructure delivery projects at town level or for a few thousand geographically clustered premises. In the past few weeks, BDUK have announced their Gigabit plans and that contained forecast dates and figures relating to planned activity in Cheshire East.
- 6.12.** BDUK have stated they are increasingly confident in delivering gigabit coverage for 85% of UK premises by 2025 and pushing further towards 100% nationwide coverage. Key information for Cheshire East with forecast dates and values as follows:

Phase 3	Estimated Procurement Start Date subject to change	Estimated contract commencement date subject to change	Modelled number of uncommercial premises in procurement area subject to change	Indicative Contract Value subject to change
Cheshire (Lot 17)	Feb - Apr 2023	Jan - Mar 2024	74,300	£85m - £144m

7. Issues, Challenges & Barriers

- 7.1.** The current Digital Cheshire project is externally funded and staff in place are contracted only until 2023 when the Digital Cheshire project is due to close. The team is therefore managing these resources and seeking to recruit to vacancies, and additional opportunities to extend the Scheme delivery.
- 7.2.** Data on coverage is key to developing effective projects and activities and is a requirement in obtaining external funds. Broadband coverage is a rapidly changing and past data collected by the Council becomes out of date quickly. Connecting Cheshire is looking to obtain new data from BDUK as there is currently no capacity to monitor coverage ourselves.
- 7.3.** Subsidy Control and / or State Aid is, an issue that can impact digital projects, in particular infrastructure, compliance with Subsidy Control / State Aid rules will be required.

- 7.4. External bodies such as BDUK can create issues in that their priorities do not always align with those of Cheshire East or the Cheshire region. For example, in the BDUK flagship 'Project Gigabit' initiative, a key element of 'area wide' regional scale projects will not likely be deployed for some time as Cheshire is in the last 'phase' of national deployment. However, discussions are ongoing and elements such as the Voucher scheme or 'local area' deployments, as previously covered, should not be subject to Cheshire's 'last in the queue' status.

Forthcoming Approvals Required

- 7.5. Economy & Growth Committee will be asked to consider and approve two aspects of digital connectivity at Committee in January 2022. Those decisions are summarised as follows

7.6. **Voucher 'Top-up' Scheme**

Approvals will be sought to use Gainshare funding to deploy a voucher top up scheme in the Cheshire area. The approvals will centre on participation in a Connecting Cheshire (Cheshire wide) project, activity and financial approvals specific to CEC and approval on any staffing requirements.

Digital Cheshire/Airband Contract Extension

- 7.7. To secure the additional funding a number of approvals will likely be required including approval to accept the funding from BDUK. This approval will be required as the previous funding approval related to monies from MHCLG / DLUHC. Further approval will be required to exercise the option to extend the current contract with Airband.

7.8. **Conclusion**

The pandemic has seen increased burden placed on the digital infrastructure across the UK through Lockdowns and Remote Working. This has led to a change of culture within the commercial and business environment, with a clear shift to working from home. This has increased pressure on connectivity to both homes and businesses in areas with poor or intermittent coverage, particularly those in our rural communities. It is therefore important to maintain a focus on enhancement and extension of quality connectivity within the area served by the Connecting Cheshire Partnership. Annual updates will be provided to the Economy & Growth Committee

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1. In September 2019, the Connecting Cheshire Partnership undertook an Open Market Review of coverage in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington to understand where commercial deployment is planned in the coming years.
- 8.2. This exercise involved the consultation and receipt of data from operators with a presence in the area and was following with a public consultation and publication of the findings via coverage maps.

9. Implications

Legal

- 9.1.** Future funding will need to consider whether State Aid or Subsidy Control will apply and ensure that appropriate legal advice is sought prior to applying for funding.
- 9.2.** This exercise involved the consultation and receipt of data from operators
- 9.3.** Generally State Aid rules will apply to projects / funding programmes commenced prior to Brexit, Subsidy Control will apply to those projects / funding programmes that commenced after the UK left the European Union. The UK is currently working under WTO rules relating to Subsidy Control, it is however in the process of developing its own Subsidy Control rules.

Finance

- 9.4.** The funding section covers the key funding areas in place or likely to be accessed by future projects or digital activities. As summarised the key internal funding for digital projects are derived from 'Gainshare' funds accrued as a result of previous Connecting Cheshire projects.
- 9.1.** Gainshare funds themselves are currently held on BT's balance sheet but payable to CEC at fixed points in the near future, so current utilisation is based on funds linked to future receipts. Non-receipt of these funds is not considered a risk, however formal arrangements for the transfer of funds require finalisation and this activity is underway.
- 9.2.** While CEC is free to allocate funding independently, in terms of allocating funding proportions that are nominally derived from other LA contributions this would be carried out after receiving formal approval from the relevant other Authority partners.
- 9.3.** If any activities that are, or propose to, provide coverage across the Connecting Cheshire area are subject to withdrawal or non-participation by a partner the project or activities would be 'de-scoped' or reduced in size to reflect this – alternatively potentially other partners may wish to increase their own participation if desirable.
- 9.4.** Digital Cheshire funding is already approved and in place, it receives external ERDF funding from DLUHC (formerly MHCLG) which is subject to strict ERDF controls, compliance, and audit requirements. Not adhering to requirements would create a risk of financial penalties and the repayment of funds. It is important to maintain controls and apply strict project management and financial controls to the project to minimise the risk of any non-compliance penalties.

Policy

- 9.5.** It supports the Council's Corporate Plan, through three outcomes.

- 9.6. 1) To ensure strong, resilient and connected communities by allowing residential properties surrounding targeted SMEs in 'hard to reach areas' gain access to faster connectivity speeds;
- 9.7. 2) To promote lifelong learning and skills by enhancing digital access, and skills for qualifying SME employees, and therefore enabling investment in transformational ICT projects to improve productivity and access to markets; and
- 9.8. 3) To promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by supporting the LEP strategy.

Equality

- 9.9. The premises receiving new connectivity have been determined via the deployment model supplied by Airband which was based on the list of State Aid passed premises which was determined via a full Open Market Review exercise.
- 9.10. SME beneficiaries of the digital support will have to pass ERDF qualification criteria, if the numbers of applicants exceed available capacity then places will be allocated based on those assessed as likely to receive the greatest benefit from the support.
- 9.11. Improvements to digital connectivity will be important to improve accessibility to all residents, enabling increased inclusiveness and reducing isolation to all groups and communities.

Human Resources

- 9.12. Digital Cheshire delivery staff are fixed term staff contracted until September 2023. Connecting Cheshire resource is a via external contractor (0.5FTE) with rolling renewal.

Risk Management

- 9.13. A risk register is in place for the Digital Cheshire project.

Rural Communities

- 9.14. The Cheshire region contains a high proportion of rural or remotely located areas that have in many cases suffered from poor levels of digital connectivity. This poor connectivity is not just a problem in terms of residents unable to access digital services but has also impacted the economic development of these communities.
- 9.15. Businesses that increasingly rely on digital communications or routes to market do not wish to be in areas where they would be disadvantaged by poor connectivity and so many establish themselves elsewhere. Already established businesses suffer a disadvantage and are unable to reap any of the productivity or other benefits of digital connectivity and are constrained in their economic growth.
- 9.16. Rural and semi-rural areas with already pre-existing issues of lack of employment opportunities and other exclusion issues could experience further adversity if digital support is not provided. Digital Cheshire with both its infrastructure connectivity and business support elements directly

addresses this issue and will enable business growth, to help generate the wider economic benefits such as local employment opportunities.

- 9.17.** Digital Connectivity is an important issue for our rural communities and will be a key workstream within the emerging Rural Action Plan. The aspirations will be around delivering digital support to rural businesses, and to promote access to rural connectivity schemes such as Digital Cheshire, and also an ability to measure progress in connectivity.

Children and Young People/Cared for Children

- 9.18.** The programmes do not specifically target children or young people however provision of infrastructure enabling remote learning (in particular during recent Lockdown conditions) and also access to support services may be an indirect beneficial impact.

Public Health

- 9.19.** There is no direct impact on the public health of residents, however provision of infrastructure enabling access to online health services and support may be an indirect beneficial impact.

Climate Change

- 9.20.** There is no direct impact on climate change or carbon emissions, however provision of infrastructure enabling remote working (and other online services) could reduce business and employment related transport journeys and emissions.

Access to Information	
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Appendix 1 :

Glossary

Airband – Airband, or Airband Community Internet Limited, are a broadband infrastructure supplier that are delivering connectivity for the Digital Cheshire programme.

Beneficiary – An ERDF term to describe an individual or organisation that receives support from an ERDF funded activity.

BDUK - Building Digital UK (Directorate within DCMS responsible for programmes delivering superfast and full fibre networks).

Connecting Cheshire – Name of the partnership between Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Warrington, and Halton Borough Councils to enable joint and collaborative digital infrastructure activities.

DCMS - Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport.

DLUHC - The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (formerly MHCLG).

Digital Cheshire Programme – The current programme/project of connectivity deployment and business support being delivered by Connecting Cheshire.

ERDF - European Regional Development Fund.

Fibre – High speed capable optical fibre connections.

Fibre to Cabinet/Fibre Cabinet - Fibre to Cabinet or Fibre cabinets are local exchange cabinets that have been given fibre connectivity to enable Superfast over remaining copper premise connection.

Fibre to Premise/Full Fibre – Fibre to Premise or Full fibre is a fibre connection direct to a premise which enables gigabit connectivity speeds.

Gigabit (speed) – Connectivity speeds of at least 1,000 Mbps.

MHCLG - The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now DLUHC).

OMR – Open Market Review (exercise).

Openreach – The largest national supplier and operator of broadband and fixed line infrastructure.

Premise – A single residential dwelling or single commercial premise.

SME – An SME is a ‘small or medium-sized enterprise,’ and have less than 250 employees.

Superfast – Connectivity speeds of at least 30 Mbps.