

# Overview and Scrutiny Board

Report subject	<b>Call for Evidence – 5G Connectivity</b>
Meeting date	11 November 2019
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	Following a call for evidence on 5G connectivity commissioned by the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Board, this report sets out a summary of responses received and asks the Board to consider the next steps required in relation to this work.
Recommendations	<b>It is RECOMMENDED that the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Board considers the responses received to the call for evidence, and the officer report relating to 5G - set out at Appendices 1 and 2 - and determines the next steps required in relation to this matter.</b>
Reason for recommendations	The O&S Board agreed to undertake a call for evidence in relation to 5G connectivity, in response to representations made to the council by residents, businesses, organisations and academia of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole. The purpose of the call for evidence was to allow the O&S Board to gain a better understanding of the level of public interest and the breadth of views in relation to 5G. An Officer report was also requested to outline the background facts in relation to 5G connectivity. The O&S Board is now asked to consider the range of views received, and consider the next steps required, in order that any further O&S work on 5G connectivity may be informed by the views provided.
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Wards	All wards

Classification	For Consideration.
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## **Background detail**

### **What is an Overview and Scrutiny Call for Evidence?**

1. The Council's Constitution sets out six principles for the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) function, one of which is that the 'voice and concerns of the public' will be 'heard and reflected in the Council's decision making process'. Under the Local Government Act 2000, O&S in local government has the power to look at anything which affects 'the area, or the area's inhabitants'.
2. The call for evidence model mirrors that of Parliamentary Select Committees, which gather evidence to gain an understanding of an issue under review or potential issue for review. This allows those undertaking a review to gain a better understanding of the areas of importance for respondents. A review of evidence called by the Overview and Scrutiny Board in this way can be effective in determining the scope of a potential area of inquiry work, to ensure that outcomes of work are meaningful and can add value to the Council and its residents.

### **Reason for the Call for Evidence on 5G Connectivity**

3. The call for evidence on 5G connectivity was invited to ensure that the work plan of the O&S function was responding to matters of importance to the public. Residents, businesses, organisations and academia of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole had made representations to the Council in relation to the introduction of 5G connectivity to the area. The call for evidence provides an opportunity for a better understanding of the level of public interest and breadth of views in relation to 5G connectivity.
4. An Officer report outlining the background and facts relating to 5G connectivity was also requested by the Chairman of the O&S Board and was provided to the O&S Board at its meeting of 23 September. This is appended again to this report as Appendix 2.

### **Key Lines of Inquiry, Methodology and Responses**

5. The following broad questions were posed to respondents of the call for evidence, although all comments were welcomed in relation to 5G connectivity:
  - What are the perceived benefits to the area as a result of the implementation of 5G?
  - What are the perceived concerns relating to the implementation of 5G?

6. The methodology and timescales for the call for evidence are outlined in Appendix 1. A summary of the responses received to the call for evidence (verbal and written) is also outlined at Appendix 1.

### **Review of information received and next steps**

7. At its meeting of 9 September, the O&S Board agreed to review responses to the call for evidence at its meeting of 11 November. At this stage the Board is asked to consider:
  - the evidence received through the call for evidence – verbal and written submissions;
  - the Officer report providing information on 5G connectivity.

The intention of a call for evidence is to gain a better understanding of the public feeling in relation to an issue prior to the commissioning or scoping of detailed work, or the formation of recommendations elsewhere. This will ensure that any work undertaken by O&S in this respect is informed and meaningful in its objectives. Upon review of all information received in the call for evidence, the O&S Board will be asked to consider what further action would be appropriate. Resources available to the O&S Board to undertake further work and other items on the Board's overall forward plan should form part of the consideration of options to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to complete any further work commissioned.

### **Options**

8. Upon review of the responses to the call for evidence and the Officer report regarding 5G connectivity (appendices 1 and 2) the following options are available to the Board:
  - Commission further O&S-led work on the matter of 5G connectivity;
  - Report the findings of the call for evidence and/or make recommendations to other parts of the Council (such as the Cabinet or Council) or externally (to other specified organisations such as Public Health England);
  - Take no further action.

For transparency, it is recommended that the O&S Board outlines its reasons for supporting whichever option is agreed.

Where reports or recommendations are made to the Cabinet or Council by Overview and Scrutiny there is a requirement for the Cabinet to respond to these recommendations in line with Part 4, C, 7 of the Council's Constitution 'Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules'. A similar requirement for response also applies to some bodies external to the Council, or where no statutory duty to respond applies, a response may be invited, under Part 4,C, 8 of the Council's Constitution.

## **Councillor Involvement**

9. Representations were made to the Council citing potential health implications relating to 5G connectivity. For this reason, members of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend the O&S meeting of 23 September to hear the views provided. Should further O&S inquiry work be commissioned, it is recommended that a member of the Health and Adult Social Care O&S Committee should be included in this work.

## **Summary of financial implications**

10. There are no financial implications associated with the review and response to the call for evidence.

## **Summary of legal implications**

11. There are no financial implications associated with the review and response to the call for evidence.

## **Summary of human resources implications**

12. There are no human resources implications associated with the review and response to the call for evidence.

## **Summary of environmental impact**

13. There are no environmental impacts associated with the review and response to the call for evidence.

## **Summary of public health implications**

14. There are no direct implications to public health arising from carrying out the call for evidence in and of itself. However, this review has noted that there is public concern being expressed around the introduction of 5G technologies, stemming from increases in exposure to non-ionising electromagnetic radiation. The current scientific advice provided by Public Health England, based on the work of the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiological Protection, is that health effects are unlikely to occur from exposure to 5G networks within the levels recommended by the guidelines.

## **Summary of equality implications**

15. There are no equality implications associated with the review and response to the call for evidence. The aim of the call for evidence process was to provide a range of opportunities for all those with an interest in the matter of 5G connectivity to engage with the council on the matter in order that all views could be taken account of.

## **Summary of risk assessment**

16. The purpose of this report is not to assess risk or make decisions relating to 5G. Any future decisions that may be made by the Council in relation to 5G connectivity will be informed by a risk assessment.

## **Background Papers**

'Call for Evidence – the Implementation of 5G Connectivity to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) area' - published work, currently available to view at the following link:

<https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/documents/s12581/5G%20Call%20for%20Evidence.pdf>

## **Appendices -**

Appendix 1 – 'Call for Evidence on 5G Connectivity - Summary of Responses'

Appendix 2 – '5G Background and Information'