

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## AGENDA ITEM 8(c)

### OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY BOARD

21 OCTOBER 2014

<h3>ECONOMIC REGENERATION AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL - PROGRESS REPORT</h3>
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#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To provide members of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (OSB) with an update on the work of the Economic Regeneration and Transport (ERT) Scrutiny Panel.

#### BACKGROUND

2. The scrutiny panel's investigation of the possible provision of free wi-fi in Middlesbrough is ongoing. Since the last update to OSB, the ERT Scrutiny Panel has met twice. Details of those meetings are as follows:
  - a) **25 September 2014** - The panel heard from the Council's Corporate Programme Manager. At that meeting, Members explored the information and communication technology (ICT) issues involved in free wi-fi provision. This included issues around connection to the national Public Sector Network; the Council's re-procurement of the Wide Area Network (WAN) and implications for improving buildings' connectivity; development of the authority's Digital Strategy and renewal of its mobile communications contract; and work done to date in respect of examining wi-fi provision.
  - b) **2 October 2014** - The panel heard information in respect of other local authorities that have introduced free wi-fi. This included Glasgow, Hounslow, Kendal, York, Birmingham, Bristol and Plymouth. Information was also submitted regarding information from service providers in respect of their anticipated developments regarding future wi-fi provision. Particular reference was made to the comparatively small-scale development of public wi-fi in Middlesbrough (ie in relation to large cities) and the associated possible implications for funding of the scheme.
3. At the 2 October 2014 meeting, Members also discussed progress in respect of the ongoing Transporter Bridge enhancement works. It was agreed that arrangements be made to hear further on the subject from an appropriate Council officer at a future ERT Scrutiny Panel meeting.

4. The panel's next meeting is scheduled for 23 October 2014. Further information will be considered in respect of free wi-fi provision. At the time of writing it is hoped that a representative of the Thirteen housing group will be in attendance at the meeting to provide information on the organisation's digital/financial inclusion strategies.
5. In addition to the above, the Economic Regeneration and Transport Scrutiny Panel's final report on business support and job creation was considered and approved by The Executive on 7 October 2014.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

6. That the Overview and Scrutiny Board notes the content of the report and the updated position.

**COUNCILLOR PETER SHARROCKS**

**CHAIR OF THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION  
AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL**

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