

REPORT

Cllr Mrs Warrander : Cabinet Member for Resources
Cllr J Nettle (E-Advocate)

SMARTPLACE INITIATIVE

1. Matters for Consideration:

Cabinet is requested to approve an allocation in principle of £25,000 for the next two years towards the Smartplace initiative from the Implementing Electronic Government budget.

2. Introduction and Background:

This project has developed from the decision in June 2002 by a range of public sector and voluntary sector partners in Wiltshire and Swindon to work together with B.T. to secure the benefits of broadband and related technology for the people and organisations of Wiltshire and Swindon. Between June 2002 and January 2003 a series of working meetings have been held at which all partners have had the opportunity to shape the scope and contents of this project. All the proposals in this project help to carry forward key policies of the partners. These include in particular the approved Joint Vision to 2010 on E-Government in Wiltshire as put forward in the Council's Implementing Electronic Government Statement.

3. Purpose of the Project:

The purpose of the project is to maximise the benefits from I.C.T. and broadband technology for businesses, learners and communities across Wiltshire and Swindon. The project will bring benefits for all sectors in a holistic way - public and private sectors, and for voluntary and community sectors, with a particular focus on promoting long-term employability.

The Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Programme brings together a range of related projects under one programme which will have the impact on Wiltshire and Swindon of creating a better place to live, learn and work. It will do this by:

- **Investing** in people, organisations and communities.
- Unlocking their **Potential**.
- Assisting **Innovation** and creating an environment to allow innovation to succeed.
- Establishing Wiltshire and Swindon as the **Benchmark** for people, communities and businesses using new technology.

The *Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace* Programme brings together a range of projects in the areas of Business, the Public Sector, Community and Skills and Learning. It is a genuine partnership of many organisations within Wiltshire and Swindon and the Regional Development Agency. Moreover it

creates a genuine partnership between the public and private sectors and provides a unique platform to serve many organisations and individuals through inclusion in a project, which will put Wiltshire and Swindon at the forefront of development in combining people, ideas and technology.

The *Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace* Programme combines development of access and support for businesses, the public sector, voluntary and community sectors and the benefits of skills and learning in the area of I.C.T. and broadband technology. It provides a platform for the creation of new applications within this technology and enhances the ability of organisations and individuals within Wiltshire and Swindon to realise their potential, to make businesses more competitive and embrace the creativity currently evident in Wiltshire and Swindon in industries such as new media.

4. Partnerships and Partners Involved:

The Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Project will provide strategic co-ordination, economies of scale, joint working and shared expertise across its six *closely* related themes:

- (i) Business Development.
- (ii) Learning and Skills.
- (iii) Building Community Capacity.
- (iv) Public Sector Modernisation.
- (v) Improved *Broadband and I.C.T.* Communications Infrastructure - as a tool to enable the benefits from the other five themes.
- (vi) Programme Management, Marketing and Communications - which affects all the themes *and the whole project.*

The project builds on the strength of existing partnerships working in Wiltshire and Swindon - under the leadership of the Wiltshire Strategic Board. It draws on support from other key partnerships such as the Wiltshire and Swindon Economic Partnership and the Wiltshire and Swindon E-Government Partnership - recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as of national significance. The Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Partnership brings together key organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

5. Benefits:

The benefits from this project will flow to individuals, communities, businesses and learners in Wiltshire and Swindon. While the project spend is for three years, the benefits will continue for many years beyond 2006. This project will help achieve the Strategic Vision for Wiltshire and Swindon, and for each of their towns to 2010.

The project will deliver against a set of primary aims and against outcomes for each of the six specific themes within the programme of projects. The primary aims are set out below, and the benefits and outcomes for each of the six themes in the next section.

- (i) Stimulate significant economic development in Wiltshire and Swindon, including promotion of long-term, high quality employment.
- (ii) Contribute significantly to community regeneration through improved life-chances, learning and work, and thereby reinforce the Market Towns regeneration policy.

- (iii) Achieve these improvements in a balanced, equitable and socially inclusive way throughout Wiltshire and Swindon, and their constituent towns and rural areas.
- (iv) Create a "culture of innovation and technology" by changing the way individuals, communities and businesses view technology and use technology.
- (v) Stimulate a much higher than average demand for I.C.T. services in Wiltshire and create a highly developed I.C.T. literate user community, and stimulate a variety of suppliers to meet this demand.
- (vi) Combat the "digital divide" by building community capacity and individuals' confidence to use modern technology, and by making the needs of the disadvantaged 20% of the population a priority in the project.
- (vii) Trigger accelerated private sector investment in the infrastructure - to enable high speed access to Internet services for S.M.Es., micro-business, the voluntary and community sectors.
- (viii) Achieve cost effective ways of delivering broadband solutions to communities and businesses in areas of Wiltshire and Swindon that would otherwise be without broadband access, and match this to communities' and firms' demands in these areas.
- (ix) Enable the project partners to share the investment and community support risks in broadband technology in the sub-region.
- (x) Widen access to high speed internet services for consumers and those seeking new learning and employment opportunities in Wiltshire and Swindon, encourage new firms to move to the area, and existing firms and individuals to be happy to stay.
- (xi) Stimulate the development of high quality learning, skills and education and a culture of self improvement at individual, community and sub-regional level.
- (xii) Create better ways of joined up working within the public sector and develop new ways of working between the public, private and voluntary and community sectors in Wiltshire and Swindon.

6. Financial Implications:

As described above, the outline costs of the project can be summarised as follows:

Total Costs : 2003/4 to 2005/6		
Theme 1	Business Development	£1.30m
Theme 2	Learning Skills and Education	£0.60m
Theme 3	Building Community Capacity	£1.40m
Theme 4	Public Sector Modernisation	To be funded from IEG programmes
Theme 5	Improved Communications Infrastructure	£3.00m
Theme 6	Management, Co-ordination, Marketing and Communications	£0.70m
Total		£7.00m

This will be funded by contributions over the three years of the project as follows:

Organisation	Percentage	Amount £
B.T. & Private Sector	60	4.200m
S.W. Regional Development Agency	20	1.400m
Wiltshire County Council	6	0.420m
District Councils (4 x 1% at £70k each)	4	0.280m
L.S.C.	4	0.280m
Business Link	4	0.280m
Swindon Borough Council & Partnership	2	0.140m
Total	100	7.00m

The Smartplace project is therefore seeking approval of a contribution from the District Council of £70,000 over two years. This can be made as a cash contribution and contributions in kind. The Council Officers have been supporting the development of this programme and will continue to do so. It is calculated that this is the equivalent of a contribution in kind of £10,000 per annum. The cash contribution required will be £25,000 per year.

The Council's has received a grant from the government to implement its E-Government programme of £200,000 for the last two financial years. The Cabinet has previously identified that up to £50,000 of this fund can be used to support joint initiatives developed by the Wiltshire and Swindon E-Government Partnership. It is therefore recommended that support for this programme can be funded from this source.

7. Considerations:

The Council's E-Advocate (Councillor J. Nettle) and E-Champion (D. Neudegg) are members of the Smartplace Project Board chaired by the leader of the County Council (Councillor Mrs. J. Scott). It is considered that the programme will offer significant benefits for the Business, Learning and Voluntary communities in Wiltshire and Swindon. However, some concern remains about the detail investment and benefits that will accrue in Salisbury and South Wiltshire. To that end it is considered appropriate to review the second years allocation to the programme subject to the representatives on the board being satisfied that appropriate investment and benefits are being realised locally.

Furthermore, it is essential that the programme links to the Council's own Economic Development objectives as recently approved by the Cabinet. It is therefore recommended that the Economic Development strategy is amended to reflect the importance of Broadband development for local businesses.

8. Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to approve the following:

- (a) Note the contents of the report.
- (b) Authorise the contribution of £25,000 from the Council's E-Government budget and a contribution in kind the equivalent of £10,000.

- (c) Delegate to the Council's E-Advocate and E-Champion the authorisation of a further contribution of £25,000 subject to being satisfied that appropriate benefits and investment are realised within the District.
- (d) Request that the Economic Development policy be amended to reflect the importance of Broadband development for local businesses.

9. Background Papers:

Wiltshire and Swindon E-Government Vision.

10. Implications:

- **Financial** : Contained within report.
- **Legal** : The well-being powers under Part II of the Local Government Act 2000 give the Council the power to enter into this initiative. An agreement between the various parties involved setting out the rights and liabilities of each will be needed.

In view of the fact that the outcome of the initiative is intended to have a significant impact on communities living or working in the whole district this decision is considered to be a key decision.

- **Human Rights** : None for the purposes of this report
- **Personnel** : None
- **Community Safety** : None
- **Environmental** : None
- **Ward(s) Affected** : None
- **Consultation Undertaken:** E-Advocates