

## **Broadband Update 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

This is the third news update on the subject of broadband and proposed improvements to the service available to the village. There will be further updates when the situation changes.

### **Parish Council Policy**

In the past few months the Parish Council has had to fight a rearguard action to ensure we remain on the Leicestershire County Council Phase I plan for BT to deliver superfast broadband to the village. For the last month it has been clear that the BT deployment is secure and that, subject to demand, we may also have a second supplier, Gigaclear, delivering a service to the village. This is welcome in that it both provides choice and maintains competition.

The Parish Council wishes to remain completely neutral with respect to these two suppliers. Both should have an equal opportunity to market their service into the village. We want residents to have access to all the information they need to make an informed choice.

### **Open Meetings**

As part of the above we welcomed BT to the village on 27<sup>th</sup> October for an Open Meeting. Well over 40 residents attended the meeting which was both informative and lively. We will be hosting a similar event for Gigaclear on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November; there will be more information on this nearer the time. Please save the date.

### **WVBG Newsletter**

The BT meeting was attended by Martin Griffin who leads the Welland Valley Broadband Group (WVBG); you will recall that Medbourne left this group in June owing to a major disagreement. Following the meeting Mr. Griffin asked us to distribute the WVBG October Newsletter via the village email list. Paul Polito and I both reviewed the newsletter and concluded that it compromised the policy of "equal opportunity" set out above. The Parish Council can't recommend a particular supplier so a polite refusal to distribute the newsletter was sent to WVBG.

Most of you will have since received the newsletter through your letterbox. We are extremely disappointed that WVBG sees fit to disrespect both the wishes and the authority of the Parish Council by distributing this newsletter.

Besides our concerns about recommending a specific supplier, the newsletter contains a serious factual error. It also presents a comparison of BT and Gigaclear on the basis of broadband performance and monthly cost. In so doing, it over-simplifies the choice on offer; the most generous comment I can make about this comparison is that it's misleading.

### **Monthly Costs Comparison**

I am not prepared to publish a direct comparison of the two suppliers. It contravenes the Parish Council's neutrality principle and carries the possibility of misrepresenting one or both of them. As a case in point, those who attended the BT meeting, or have seen a recent TV advert, will know the monthly cost of BT Infinity and will have realised that the figure in the WVBG newsletter is

significantly different. Also, BT fibre optic broadband is an open platform supporting a whole host of other suppliers like Sky, TalkTalk, PlusNet, etc.; this makes it almost impossible to produce a meaningful comparison of monthly costs.

## The Key Questions

The best I can do in this newsletter is to provide a list of questions that you should consider before making a supplier choice. Whilst these newsletters focus on broadband, your relationship with a supplier actually covers three main service areas: telephone, broadband and value added services, typically Internet Service Provider (ISP) services. Consequently, it's important that you consider all three areas and not just broadband alone.

Below is a list of relevant questions:

**Broadband:** Speed (download and upload)?  
Security and reliability?  
Future strategy of supplier?

**Cost:** Up-front commitment?  
Installation cost?  
Monthly cost?

**Availability:** When will the service be deployed?  
Confidence in the delivery plan?

**Telephony:** Line rental?  
Call costs/packages?  
Telephony services (e.g. voicemail)?  
Underlying technology (phone network or internet)?

**Disruption:** Physical disruption (e.g. earthworks)?  
Technical disruption (e.g. install new router, change email address)?

**Viability of Supplier:**  
Funding?  
Track record?  
Possible takeover target?

**ISP services:** Email?  
Cloud services?  
Access to WiFi when away from home?  
Content (e.g. BT Sport)?  
Web site hosting?

**Competition:** Ability to switch supplier?

**Contract:** Terms and conditions?  
Duration?

**Service:** Service agreement?  
Service track record?

Not all of these topics have equal weight and their relative importance will vary from customer to customer. I therefore repeat my offer to consult with anyone who needs help in this area.

## **Gigaclear Target and Registration**

At present Gigaclear is testing the market. According to WVVG it needs 246 households in the Welland Valley to commit or it will not be cost-effective to deploy in this area.

The recent Gigaclear postcard encouraged people to register interest on their web site. At this stage we believe it makes sense for residents not to make any firm decision until after they have attended the Gigaclear meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

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*4<sup>th</sup> November 2014*