

## Light Blue Fibre Annual Progress Report

To: Environment and Green Investment Committee

Meeting Date: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023

From: Executive Director; Place and Sustainability

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: N/A

Outcome: The purpose of this report is to update the E&GI Committee on the progress of the Light Blue Fibre Joint Venture Company between Cambridgeshire County Council and the University of Cambridge.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to note the progress of the Light Blue Fibre company over the last year, as set out in the report below and the attached confidential appendix.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 In 2019 the Council's Commercial and Investment (C&I) Committee approved the establishment of a joint venture commercial company with the University of Cambridge, known as Light Blue Fibre. The purpose of Light Blue Fibre is to market the fibre assets of the University and the Council on a commercial basis.
- 1.2 As part of the governance arrangements the C&I Committee passed oversight of the operation of Light Blue Fibre to the Environment and Green Investment (E&GI) Committee, which subsequently approved an annual reporting cycle. This report is the second annual progress update for the Light Blue Fibre Company. The first [Light Blue Fibre Progress Report](#) was presented to the E&GI Committee in January 2022, and included an overview of the structure and operation of the company.
- 1.3 This report includes a brief overview of the progress of Light Blue Fibre since 2022, together with a confidential appendix which includes details of the operational and financial progress of the company.

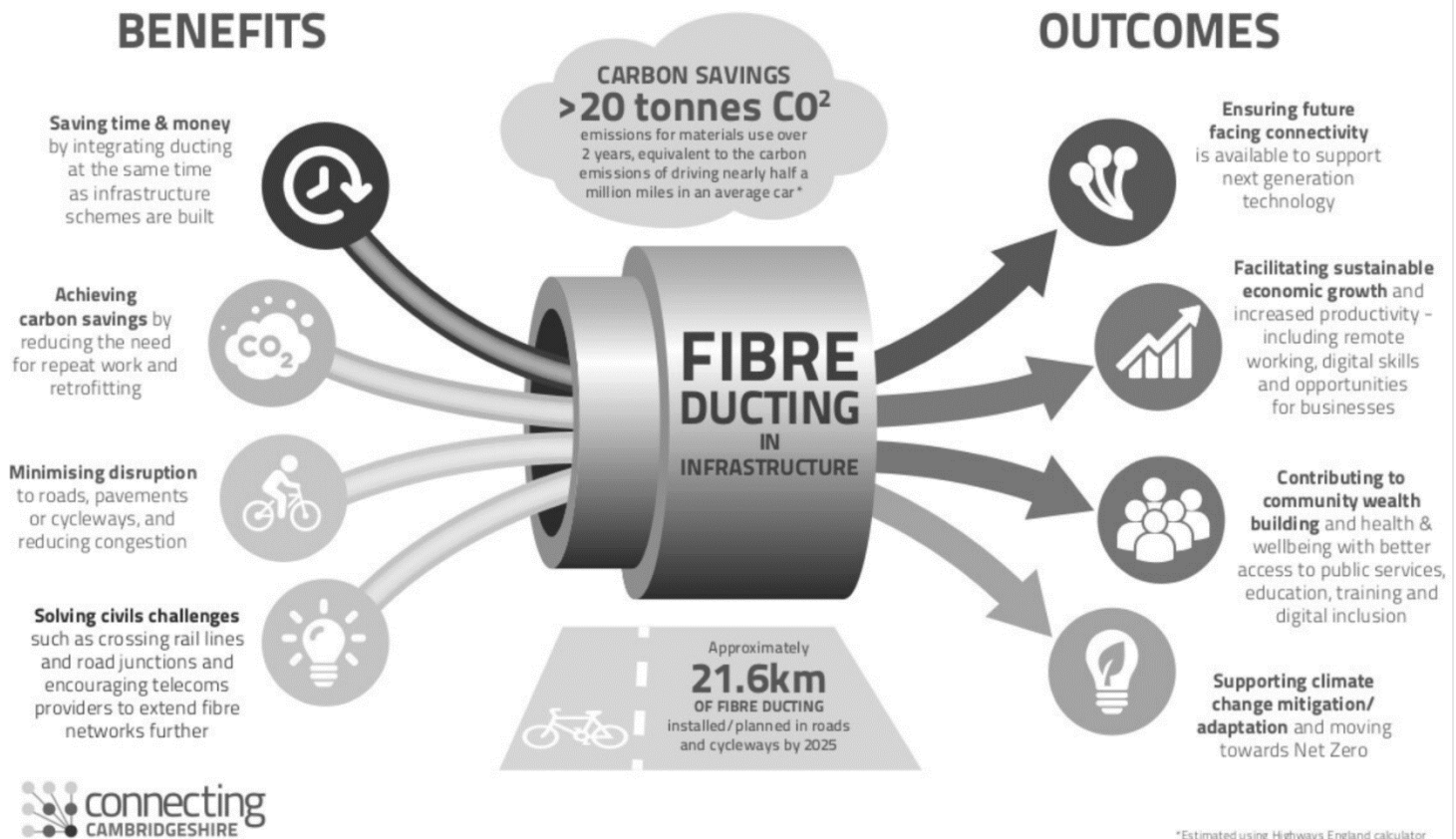
## 2. Main Issues

### Strategic Context

- 2.1 In 2022 the E&GI Committee endorsed the [Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Strategy 2021-2025](#), which highlighted the extent to which having future facing digital connectivity underpins the Council's aims for sustainability, fairness and an economically strong Cambridgeshire. A salient element of the digital connectivity strategy involves leveraging the Council's key position in the delivery of transport and other infrastructure projects to increase the fibre footprint across the County by incorporating fibre ducting in all infrastructure schemes where it is feasible to do so.
- 2.2 Fibre ducting is used to carry fibre optic cables which form the basis of high speed fibre broadband which is the underpinning infrastructure required for all forms of digital connectivity – whether fixed (eg home broadband and business connectivity) or 4G and 5G mobile services.
- 2.3 The infographic below summarises the benefits of incorporating fibre ducting into infrastructure schemes compared to the expensive, disruptive, and environmentally damaging approach of retrofitting fibre ducting after the completion of transport and other infrastructure schemes:

# Fibre Ducting in Infrastructure Schemes

Deploying fibre ducting at the same time as delivering infrastructure schemes brings many other benefits as well as better digital connectivity



- 2.4 The operation of Light Blue Fibre is a key element of this approach, enabling the resulting fibre assets to be made available on a commercial basis and ensuring that the fibre assets developed are fully utilised. This has the dual benefit of providing a modest financial return to the Council as well as helping to deliver better digital connectivity for Cambridgeshire.

## Light Blue Fibre Progress

- 2.5 Following the formal establishment of Light Blue Fibre in late 2019, the company has just completed its 3<sup>rd</sup> full year of trading. Operationally and commercially, Light Blue Fibre is on track, or even slightly ahead of the original business plan. Its success to date is underpinned by close collaboration and a positive working relationship between the University and the Council. The commercial and financial details of the operation of Light Blue Fibre, which are commercially sensitive, are set out in Appendix 1.

## 3. Source documents

- 3.1 Source documents: [Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Digital Connectivity Strategy 2021-2025](#)