

## **8 Free Wi-Fi in the TRA halls and faster mobile access** **Report from Alec Hartopp, Programme Manager Digital Connectivity**

8.1 We would like to share with DMCs what we think is an exciting opportunity for Camden residents and local businesses and we would welcome your feedback and thoughts on the proposal.

### **8.2 The Proposal**

We want to speed up broadband and mobile coverage in the borough and generate income for the Housing Revenue Account, by upgrading the telecommunications infrastructure.

We also want to get Wi-Fi access on to our estates to give more people access to the internet and social media. We are proposing to fit Wi-Fi connections in 74 TRA Halls that will provide wireless hotspots across the whole Borough which we're proposing are used for homeworking clubs, housing drop ins as well as supporting TRA activities. Access to Wi-Fi will also help to boost poor tenant participation rates in on line services including the Camden Account.

By increasing telecoms coverage in the Borough we are also helping local businesses and suppliers who need high speed internet access, at low cost if they are to be competitive in a digital economy. At the moment, there are serious problems in the south of the Borough, for example, with the availability of high speed broadband services.

### **8.3 How we will do this**

At the moment there are around 370 telecommunications masts in Camden, many on rooftops of council blocks and only 12 of these generate any income for Camden residents. This means we are losing out on significant income which is likely to amount to millions of pounds per annum.

Camden is proposing to take the initiative with the telecommunications companies to ensure that the next round of installations in the Borough deliver benefits to residents and businesses. From market research, we estimate that telecommunications companies want to install around 60 new masts on Camden property which will generate around £600,000 a year of income, primarily benefitting the Housing Revenue Account. This income stream is likely to grow as demand for capacity continues and new services are made available.

Alongside this we are proposing to boost digital skills and increase poor levels of tenant participation in on line services with the support of TRAs who, as part of the Wi-Fi installation, participate in a session on digital learning that we are exploring with the Tinder Foundation.

By investing more in telecommunications infrastructure, more of the Borough's residents will also benefit from better mobile phone signals and a likely reduction in the number of black spots in the Borough.

The traditional look of telecom equipment is 15m tall masts with multiple

antennas and dishes. This is no longer the case and equipment is becoming much smaller and less obtrusive, installations are typically 2.5m tall and take up the same room as a garden shed. Further information and photos will be available on the Camden website.

There are no health and safety issues associated with the masts. There is significant information and research in the public domain regarding this and we will provide more information on our website.

For any proposed sites that are proposed we will proactively engage tenants and leaseholders to ensure that local views and feedback are taken into account as part of any installation.

We will ensure that any installations conforms to all relevant health and safety requirements, will not blight the building and will be implemented with the minimum of disruption to affected areas

#### 8.4 **Feedback**

We would welcome your comments about the proposals. This can be done by contacting Alec Hartopp by email at [alec.hartopp@camden.gov.uk](mailto:alec.hartopp@camden.gov.uk)

#### 8.5 **Next Steps**

We will be setting up a website to provide more information about our plans which will also provide a way of residents giving us feedback on the proposals

We will be writing to tenants and leaseholders (including TRAs) with further information, including Frequently Asked Questions.

We are engaging representatives of Camden's business community on the proposals and are seeking their feedback as well.

Cabinet will be discussing the proposals on the 21st October

For more information contact [alec.hartopp@camden.gov.uk](mailto:alec.hartopp@camden.gov.uk) 020 7974 1336

