

Agenda Item 5

For decision: FTC's Position on the Rollout of 5G

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Summary

In July 2019, Council considered its position on the rollout of 5G, where the following recommendation was agreed:

"Frome Town Council has a moral responsibility to protect public health and the local environment. Until there is more independent scientific consensus that 5G wireless radiation is harmless to humans and the environment, FTC adopts the precautionary principle and will not endorse the rollout of 5G".

Earlier this month, the Town Council was consulted by Mendip District Council on a planning application for a replacement telecoms mast to support 5G. This application was considered by the FTC's planning committee, which did not object to the proposals but were unable to support the application as the committee were bound by the existing 5G policy above. The planning committee has recommended that Council reconsiders its position.

In August 2020, the Government published a guide on 5G mobile technology. The guide deals with the issue of health concerns about 5G technology and includes the findings from Public Health England (Government advisors who take the lead on public health matters associated with electromagnetic fields, or radio waves). In relation to 5G, Public Health England have said that "the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines and, as such, there should be no consequences for public health".

The full guide can be found here -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913179/5G_mobile_technology_a_guide.pdf

In addition to the above, Government has written to all county, district and unitary council Chief Executives advising them that local authorities have an essential role to play, by supporting investment in digital communications infrastructure by ensuring that they have policies and procedures in place that promote effective engagement with the digital communications industry and minimise barriers to deployment.

This is further supported by Section 5 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which sets out the Government's general overview regarding the support of high quality communications infrastructure, recognising that advanced, high-quality communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth.

There is a part of the community which strongly disagrees with Government and its advisors and maintains that there are serious risks to health from 5G.

It should be noted that Frome Town Council has no power to permit or halt the rollout of 5G. It is a statutory consultee on all planning applications.

Since Council last discussed 5G in 2019, Government guidance is much stronger in favour of 5G and is clearly based on the advice from Public Health England. In addition, Mendip is highly unlikely to object to 5G mast applications on health grounds. It is recommended that FTC follow Government guidance and support future planning applications for 5G masts, notwithstanding concerns around siting and design.

Recommendation

FTC will support planning applications for digital communications infrastructure, including 5G masts, notwithstanding legitimate planning concerns around siting and design.