

**Meeting: Overview & Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 17 February 2021**

**Wards Affected: all**

**Report Title: Response to concerns raised by constituents relating to the implementation of 5G technologies**

Decision requested for implementation by 31 March 2021.

**Cabinet Member Contact Details:** Councillor Jackie Stockman, Lead Cabinet member for Public Health, [Jackie.Stockman@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.Stockman@torbay.gov.uk)

**Director/Assistant Director Contact Details:** Julia Chisnell, Consultant in Public Health, [Julia.Chisnell@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:Julia.Chisnell@torbay.gov.uk)

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## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 Following receipt of a petition of over 1000 signatures, Torbay Council held a debate on the implementation of 5G technologies on 6 February 2020. Council resolved:

*that, in light of the concerns raised by the petitioners in respect of the potential harm of 5G to Torbay's residents, the Overview and Scrutiny Board is commissioned to undertake further investigation of the matter (including participating in Devon County Council's Spotlight Review on Cyber-Security and Health Concerns over 5G Rollout).*

- 1.2 A number of Torbay residents took part in the Scrutiny Spotlight Review in February 2020. Councillor Howgate and Julia Chisnell from the Torbay Public Health team attended as observers.

- 1.3 On 17 September 2021 Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Spotlight Review summary report and resolved as follows:

*that Cabinet be asked to write to the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, with copies to the Local Government Association, Public Health England and Devon MPs, to request that this Select Committee gives consideration to the earnest concerns expressed by some residents of this County and beyond about the health and environmental impacts of 5G and supports this Government to address those concerns by providing greater reassurance and evidence to the general public that the technology is safe. If such reassurance and evidence cannot be provided, then we suggest further research is urgently undertaken.*

- 1.4 Torbay Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the Devon County Council Spotlight Review report and to consider whether the Leader of the Council should be requested to write to the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee in like manner, reflecting the concerns expressed by some of the residents of Torbay around the implementation of 5G.

## **2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits**

We want Torbay and its residents to thrive. We want individuals and businesses to benefit from safe and resilient technologies. And we want people to feel confident that their views are heard.

- 2.1 The proposals in this report help us to deliver this ambition by responding to the concerns of residents around the delivery of the 5G programme.
- 2.2 Council asked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look further into the concerns expressed by some residents relating to the implementation of 5G technologies and to participate in the Devon Spotlight Review. This paper proposes that Torbay adopt a parallel approach to Devon, responding to the concerns of participants in the review by making representations to relevant national bodies concerning the approach to the roll out of 5G.

## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

It is recommended:

- (i) that the Overview and Scrutiny Board note the outcome of the Devon Spotlight Review on 5G; and
- (ii) that the Leader of the Council be requested to write to the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, with copies to the Local Government Association, Public Health England and Devon MPs, to request that this Select Committee gives consideration to the earnest concerns expressed by some Torbay residents about the health and environmental impacts of 5G and supports this Government to address those concerns by providing greater reassurance and evidence to the general public that the technology is safe.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Devon Spotlight review report: attached

## **Background Documents**

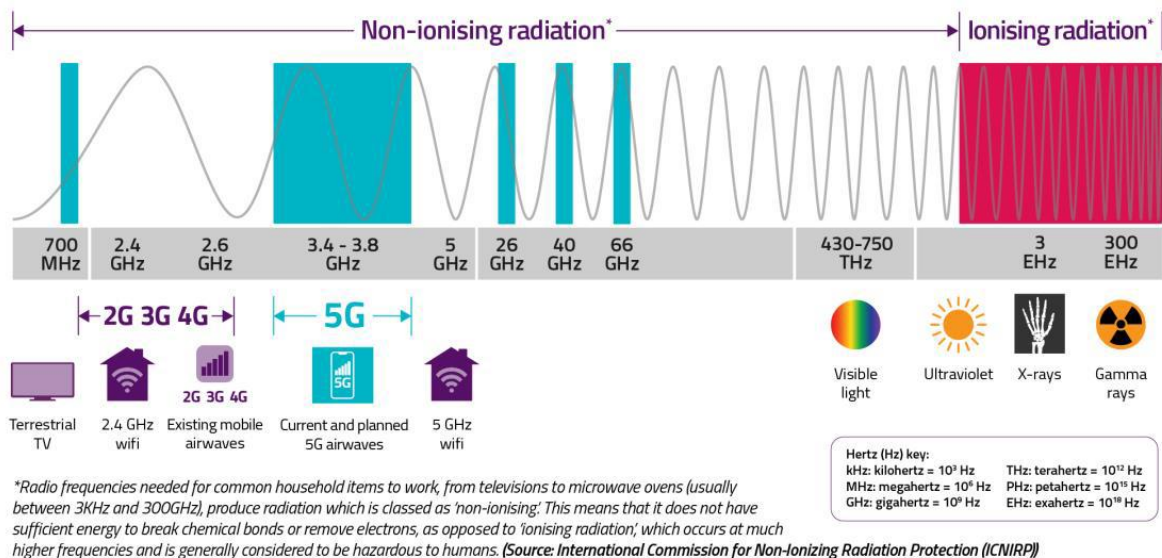
- 1 Short briefing on 5G technologies and health: [5G technologies: radio waves and health - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/5g-technologies-radio-waves-and-health)
- 2 Ofcom briefing on 5G: [5G mobile technology: a guide \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644442/5g-mobile-technology-a-guide.pdf)

# Supporting Information

## 1. Introduction

### What is 5G?

- 1.1 5G is a technology operating at slightly higher frequencies than existing telecommunications bands.
- 1.2 Where 5G fits in the electromagnetic spectrum:



- 1.3 There are effectively two forms of 5G. The first will utilise sub 10GHz spectrum (operating in very similar frequencies to current 3G and 4G services). This spectrum has very similar characteristics to current mobile communications technologies that have been in use for 30 years and has also been previously granted use for radio and TV broadcasts. The second, future use, will utilise 24GHz -300GHz spectrum, the so-called millimetre wave frequencies associated with more revolutionary 5G aspects.

### Action to date by Torbay Council

- 1.4 Following receipt of a petition of over 1000 signatures, Torbay Council held a debate on the implementation of 5G technologies on 6 February 2020.
- 1.5 The wording of the petition was as follows:

*'The undersigned residents of Torbay do not consent to 5G street furniture on Council property such as lamp posts and buildings. This technology is being imposed on us and we want a moratorium on any roll out of 5G infrastructure on Council managed property until it can be proven to be safe and the technology insurable.'*

1.6 Following debate, Council resolved:

*that, in light of the concerns raised by the petitioners in respect of the potential harm of 5G to Torbay's residents, the Overview and Scrutiny Board is commissioned to undertake further investigation of the matter (including participating in Devon County Council's Spotlight Review on Cyber-Security and Health Concerns over 5G Rollout).*

1.4 A number of Torbay residents took part in the Scrutiny Spotlight Review in February 2020. Councillor Howgate and Julia Chisnell from the Torbay Public Health team attended as observers.

### **Devon County Council Spotlight Review**

1.5 On 17 September 2021 Devon Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Spotlight Review summary report and resolved as follows:

*that Cabinet be asked to write to the Parliamentary Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, with copies to the Local Government Association, Public Health England and Devon MPs, to request that this Select Committee gives consideration to the earnest concerns expressed by some residents of this County and beyond about the health and environmental impacts of 5G and supports this Government to address those concerns by providing greater reassurance and evidence to the general public that the technology is safe. If such reassurance and evidence cannot be provided, then we suggest further research is urgently undertaken.*

## **2. Options under consideration**

2.1 Torbay residents took part in the Devon Spotlight Review and their views were taken into account in the findings.

2.2 A copy of the Spotlight Review is attached. The aims of the review were:

- To understand the underlying concerns from some members of the public concerning 5G technology
- To explore the validity of these concerns
- To identify the ways in which Council should or should not support the roll out of 5G.

2.3 The format of the review was:

- A survey
- Focus groups
- Interviews with experts were planned but not undertaken due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.4 Findings from the survey and focus groups are included in the attached report. Particular concerns were expressed around:

- Lack of awareness and understanding of 5G
- Fears about risks to health and the environment.

## 2.5 Summary conclusions from the review were:

- Although not included within the scope of the review, reliable scientific sources indicate no specific health risks from the roll out of 5G technology although they continue to keep possible health impacts of all aspects of mobile telecommunications under review
- Those responding to the survey and participating in the review were more likely to be those with concerns around 5G implementation so would not necessarily be representative of the population as a whole
- A number of residents locally, and elsewhere, were significantly concerned about the potential health and environmental impacts of 5G technology
- A high proportion of those engaged in the review felt there was a lack of information and understanding communicated to the public about the impact of 5G.

## 3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

3.1 None identified.

## 4. Legal Implications

4.1 None identified.

## 5. Engagement and Consultation

5.1 The Devon Scrutiny survey and Spotlight review was an extended form of consultation process involving Devon and also Torbay residents.

## 6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

6.1 Not applicable.

## 7. Tackling Climate Change

7.1 No specifics identified.

## 8. Associated Risks

8.1 Risks are around an expressed lack of public confidence in the information supporting the roll out of 5G technology.