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Offord Cluny & Offord Darcy Parish Council

The Village Hall

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**Better Broadband for the Offords**

We are all becoming increasingly dependent on a good quality, fast broadband connection to our homes whether it be to watch television, enjoy live videos with our families, get quicker access to our doctor, or to work or run a business from home. Or even simply to ensure the value of our properties does not fall below that of similar properties in areas with good broadband connections now that estate agents provide this information.

The key challenge for the UK government and its suppliers is replacing copper telephone cables with fibre optic cable right up to our home, which will greatly improve broadband speed and quality. Different schemes are being trialed across the UK and in Cambridgeshire it is the “Gigabit Voucher Scheme”.

The scheme has a simple objective: to improve broadband in rural areas where a good proportion of the residents have shown they are interested and would make use of improved broadband. Areas where the residents have shown interest would be upgraded before areas with less interest.

The Parish Council has approached the UK government and asked to be a part of the scheme because we think our residents would benefit from improved broadband, and because we would not like to see the Offords falling behind other rural parts of Cambridgeshire and the UK.

Whilst the scheme is straightforward, the details (the voucher scheme, the technology, the timescales, etc.) do make it a little complicated. We have provided the enclosed leaflet to provide more information and, in particular, to identify the many sources of information for those who wish to have a greater understanding.

There is also a time constraint as the Gigabit Voucher Scheme ends shortly and we are working to make sure we don’t run out of time.

We need you to do two things:

1. Agree to pledge your voucher through a government portal on the internet by 24th September. **This does not cost you anything.** We need sufficient numbers to pledge their vouchers for the government to commission OpenReach to do the work. We will advise you when the portal has opened.

AND

1. To agree when you pledge your voucher, to upgrade to Ultrafast Broadband once the infrastructure work has been completed in the Offords, in about 1 year. We anticipate that there will be many schemes on offer from different internet service providers, so there will be lots of choice about the package and costs of the new package, as there is now.

We are planning to hold meetings in the Village Hall to help with pledging vouchers on the following dates in September:

Tuesday 7th 6.30 - 9.30 pm

Friday 10th 3 – 6 pm

Thursday 16th 3 – 6 pm

Friday 17th 6.30 - 9.30 pm

If you are unable to attend any of the above but would like some additional help/explanation please contact the Council.

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