

## **AI Meeting summary**

### **Member Induction & BT Digital Switchover (10/06/2025)**

#### **Rural Services Network Induction Session**

Kerry Booth, the Chief Executive of the Rural Services Network, welcomed newly elected and experienced councillors to the event. Kerry outlined the RSN's mission to champion rural services, highlighting their events, newsletters, and policy work. Kerry explained that the network represents rural local authorities and other organisations, providing a voice for rural issues in Parliament and collaborating with various bodies. Kerry also mentioned upcoming events and initiatives, including a seminar on rural housing and participation in government consultations.

#### **Rural Challenges**

Kerry highlighted that urban councils receive 40% more Government Funded Spending Power per head compared to rural councils, leading to higher council taxes and reduced services. Kerry discussed issues such as affordable housing, low wages, poor transport connectivity, and limited broadband access in rural areas. Kerry emphasised the potential for the rural economy to grow by addressing these challenges, potentially adding up to £19 billion per year to the Treasury. Kerry also touched on the importance of accurate metrics in understanding rural needs and the need for targeted rural-specific plans.

#### **UK Digital Landline Transition Plan**

Chris Hockley, Digital Voice Engagement Manager from BT discussed the upcoming change to the UK's home phone service, transitioning from analogue to digital by January 2027. Chris emphasised that while the analogue network is failing due to age, the landline service itself is not being eliminated, only the transmission method is changing. Key points included maintaining the same phone numbers, no cost increases, and compatibility with existing devices. New features like scam and spam call reduction, improved call quality, and additional functionalities were highlighted. The discussion also covered options for customers without broadband, including a dedicated landline service with no changes to their home setup. Free power backup solutions were offered to vulnerable customers, and the importance of registering additional needs was stressed.

#### **Digital Phone Transition Support Plan**

Chris discussed the ongoing transition from analogue to digital phone services, with a focus on supporting vulnerable customers and ensuring a smooth switchover process. Chris explained that 2 million customers have

already been migrated, with an emphasis on protecting telecare users by providing extra support during the changeover. A campaign was launched in June to raise awareness about telecare services, and from late June, the focus will shift to moving landline-dependent customers regionally. Chris encouraged attendees to help spread awareness about the January 2027 deadline and offered support for regional training sessions and events. It was noted that while EE, BT, and Plusnet offer similar services, Plusnet customers will need to choose between moving to BT/EE or finding a new provider that offers a digital phone service.

### **Digital Phone Services Transition**

Chris explained that the change will not affect broadband services and that customers can still use their existing landlines with the new equipment. The discussion also covered the rollout of 5G services, which will run parallel to the digital phone switch but with different timelines, and the importance of ensuring rural areas are prioritised for coverage.