



# Co-operative Councils

## Innovation Network

## ENTERPRISE & SOCIAL ECONOMY

### Tameside Council

## Cooperative Network Infrastructure Ltd

The Cooperative Network Infrastructure Ltd (CNI) was formerly known as the Tameside Digital Infrastructure Cooperative but changed its name in 2019 to reflect Blackpool and Manchester City Councils both recently joining. CNI brings together public and private sector organisations to create and share new digital infrastructures in and around Tameside, Blackpool and Manchester. The cooperative offers members wholesale access to fibre and exchange point facilities allowing them to build and operate advanced digital connectivity services. Public sector members are using the same infrastructure to improve services and save costs. Private sector members are using CNI facilities to create advanced Internet and telecommunications services for sale to businesses and consumers. Within Tameside members and investors can use over 50km of fibre spine network to make better use of investment funds and accelerate deployment.

Tameside Council is working with partner organisations to build a new, advanced digital infrastructure to serve public sector, businesses and citizens. The 'thin layer model' pioneered in Tameside facilitates rapid deployment of new, 'full fibre' infrastructure, while avoiding some of the complications and downsides associated with other public sector demand aggregation, leveraged and co-investment models. Tameside and its public sector partners invest in new infrastructure assets where a business case can be made to meet needs. Then those assets are sewn together to form a coherent, integrated infrastructure that can be shared using a co-operative. In general the business case for each investment stands alone. By linking assets together into a shared network, the business case is multiplied.

Within Tameside the Council has been working with public sector partners including Tameside Hospital, the Pennine Care NHS trust, Tameside College and Jigsaw Homes - the principal registered social landlord. Following consultations, including a successful soft market test and detailed state aid advice, Tameside has extending the model to include private sector partners. The CNI was formerly established in 2018 with founder members from both private a public sectors. As with the public sector, private sector partners can contribute assets and use the integrated infrastructure to provide services. CNI has now



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completed its first successful year of trading and has seen its members deliver over 200 commercial fibre to the premise connections in Tameside alone.

DCMS and BDUKfunded Tameside to be one of six pilot 'Wave 1' projects in its £200m Local Full Fibre Network Programme, and is encouraging other authorities to learn from and use the model.

The Cooperative continues attract attention and interest within the telecommunications market and across other local authorities. It won the "Most Innovative Commercial Model" category at the annual Independent Network Cooperatives Association (INCA) Awards and was sighted as best practice UK Governments "Future Telcoms Infrastructure Review" published in 2019. In addition the Co-operative Commission report launched on 27th January 2020 by Andy Burnham and Steve Murrells (CEO of The Co-op) recommended that

*"GMCA should work with public and private sector to extend the co-operative neutral host model successfully pioneered in Tameside to other parts of Greater Manchester, aggregating digital infrastructure assets for public use and sharing them with digital and telecoms businesses, including locally based SMEs."*



## Cooperative Network Infrastructure

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