The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 9 January, 2017

Report of the Leader

Review of ICT Systems for Elected Members

Purpose of the Report

1.   To seek Cabinet approval for the provision of upgraded ICT hardware for all Members in May 2017.

Recommendations

1.   That, subject to appropriate testing, the procurement of ICT hardware for new, and returning Members in May 2017 be approved.

2.   That all Members be encouraged to access Council, Committee and Cabinet papers electronically, rather than by means of hard copies.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1.   To have an appropriate ICT System in place for Members in May 2017.

2.   To effect savings on printing costs.

Background

2.   There are Local Government Elections in May 2017 and it is important that Members are provided with appropriate ICT equipment to enable them to carry out their roles effectively and efficiently. Currently elected Members are provided with a Council laptop, home broadband and a printer when required.

3.   Cabinet on 14th March 2016 resolved "That the Council pursue the wider use by Elected Members of tablet computers, specifically in terms of Committee papers, and a future report be brought back to Cabinet and the Democratic Services Committee.

4.   The stated view of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) is that each Local Authority must ensure that all its Members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected Members should be provided with adequate telephone and e-mail facilities and electronic access to appropriate information.

5.   The Council's Member Development Strategy states that "ICT provision for Members will be reviewed on a regular basis and especially before a new intake of Members following an election".

6. In addition to the actual provision of equipment, it is considered that the arrangements for its issue, the type of equipment offered and the various officer roles and responsibilities in terms of Member ICT are in need of clarification and regularising. It is, therefore, considered timely and prudent to review any documentation governing:

- the nature of ICT equipment that will be made available to Members

- the various roles and responsibilities of officers in terms of support arrangements relating to Member ICT

- clear guidelines to assist Members in ensuring appropriate use of equipment (covering areas such as Data Protection).

7. The above documentation will be submitted to the Democratic Services Committee in January 2017 for consideration. Subject to any comments of the Committee and/or Cabinet, a link to the information will then be included in the Candidates' Pack which will be distributed to all candidates standing in the May 2017 Council Election.

Relevant Issues and Options

8. Meetings of the Democratic Services Committee include a standing item - Member ICT Update - and the approach to the provision of ICT equipment for Members for May 2017 onwards has been discussed on several occasions.

9. At the meeting in July 2016, the Head of Democratic Services suggested that the report to Cabinet on this issue should be widened to encompass options in terms of the Council's strategy for the provision of ICT equipment to new, and returning, Members following the election. At that meeting, reference was also made to the amount of recycled equipment issued at the time of the last Council elections in 2012 and to the different types of equipment issued to Members. A comprehensive discussion ensued and the general consensus of the Democratic Services Committee was as set out in Appendix A to the report.

10. In response to a specific query raised at the above meeting, the Head of Democratic Services agreed with the general view expressed that electronic distribution to Members of agendas / reports should be encouraged and that it could be accommodated within existing legislative requirements, subject to Members' preferences regarding the preferred means of receipt being clearly recorded.

11. Increased electronic distribution of information will result in financial savings in terms of printing and postal costs.

12. Members of the Democratic Services Committee have been shown a typical device that would be available for Members. This is a modern Windows 10 Tablet with detachable keyboard and a touch screen with the ability to annotate documents through the use of a digital pen. This is currently being tested by officers and a number of issues and concerns (in terms of its capabilities) have been raised. However, the actual device selected is less important than acknowledging (and formally agreeing) the need to provide "fit for purpose" ICT equipment for Members (accompanied by seeking to move as far as is practicable towards a "paperless" system).

13. A visit has been made to look at a system in place at Aneurin Bevan Health Board and how that might be adapted for this organisation. The system in place there is a result of the Health Board having commissioned a software package specifically designed for / tailored to its specifications and required functionality. The system

has been positively received within that organisation and Council officers will continue to explore software packages aimed at enabling the most effective and efficient use by Members of the ICT equipment provided.

14. Although the proportion of mono to colour printing has been reduced to around 86% - 14% there is still room to reduce the overall volume of printing and the amount of colour printing even further. The Council's draft Digital Strategy will be driving towards a paperless service wherever possible and the introduction of tablet computers for Members would reflect and help to promote the Digital Strategy and, over time, effect financial savings.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

15. The tablet devices are typically around £600, which it should be noted equates to just £2.30 per week per Member over the 5 year period of the next Administration.

16. Current printing volumes in terms of papers for meetings remain high. As such, and as part of the Council's commitment to a Digital Strategy, all Members and officers will be encouraged to access Council, Committee and Cabinet papers electronically, rather than by means of hard copies. As indicated above, increased electronic distribution of information will result in financial savings in terms of printing and postal costs, which will partially offset the costs of the hardware, as well as savings in staff time.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

17. The move to a tablet solution for Members would reduce the Council's use of paper.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

18. There are no legal implications that arise as a result of this report. Electronic distribution of papers for meetings can be accommodated within existing legislative requirements, subject to Members' preferences regarding the preferred means of receipt being clearly recorded.

Crime and Disorder Implications

19. There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

20. There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

Corporate/Service Objectives

21. This project comes under the priority outcome of Community Leadership.

Policy Framework and Budget

22. This is a matter for Executive decision.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

23. As the issue relates to all Members no ward Member consultation has taken place.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

24. Corporate Performance and Resources Scrutiny Committee.

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet : 14th March 2016
Reports to Democratic Services Committee : 26th July and 19th October 2016

Contact Officer

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Officers Consulted

Managing Director
Head of Finance
Head of Strategic ICT
Head of Legal Services

Responsible Officer:

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