

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2013

Present: County Councillor Cowan (Chairperson);
County Councillors Ali, Goddard, Holland, Hyde, Keith
Jones, Margaret Jones, McKerlich and Benjamin
Thomas

Apologies: County Councillors Chaundy, Furlong and Marshall

20 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility under Part III of the Members' Code of Conduct to declare any interest in general terms and to complete personal interest forms at the start of the meeting and then, prior to the commencement of the discussion of the item in question, specify whether it is a personal or prejudicial interest. If the interest is prejudicial, Members would be asked to leave the meeting and if the interest is personal, Members would be invited to stay, speak and vote.

21 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2012 were approved as a correct record, subject to the addition of Councillor Ali to the list of those Councillors present at the meeting.

22 : ICT PROVISION FOR MEMBERS: BUSINESS CASE

At its meeting held on 6 December 2012 the Committee considered feedback from the Task and Finish Group established to consider current ICT provision to Members. The Task and Finish Group had suggested that, over a five-year period, improved ICT facilities could be provided to Members, whilst producing a cost saving on existing provision. On 6 December 2012 the Committee requested that officers produce a costed business case for the proposed future provision of ICT facilities suggested by the Task and Finish Group. Members received a report setting out the costed business case.

The Task and Finish Group considered a number of options prior to shortlisting a Windows Tablet device and an Apple iPad as their preferred options. The Task and Finish Group further agreed that further potential cost savings should be examined by removing 'smartphone' provision, replacing them with a tablet device for email and a low-cost mobile telephone. The shortlisted options were piloted by a number of Councillors at the full meeting of the Council in December 2012.

The business case did not include costs for the improvement of wireless facilities in Council Chambers, leisure centres and community centres as these costs were included within other projects (such as the Urban Broadband Fund). The business case also did not include the costs of infrastructure for the storage of documents.

The report advised that following trials Members agreed that the iPad with Good Messaging and Dynamics software was their final preferred option. The costed business case appended to the report was constructed around this model. It was noted that the alternative model could be delivered for a similar cost and would have achieved no significant additional savings. It was expected that, over 5 years, £108,799 savings could be achieved, with a best-case scenario of a saving of £116,334.

The Committee discussed the information set out in the report. Members agreed that in order for the project to be successful a step-change in working practices would be required which Councillors would need to embrace. The Committee noted that the potential savings in printing and paper costs amounted to £40k, approximately £600 per Member. Officers were asked to provide the Committee with a breakdown of the £40k figure.

The Committee sought clarification on the level of compatibility the software provided on iPad devices was likely to have with the software on their constituents' devices. In addition, Members sought assurances that if the 4E broadband network was unavailable alternative broadband access would be available. The Committee was advised that the 4E network covered approximately 80% of the City at present. The Urban Broadband Project was currently undertaking works aimed at attaining 100% coverage. Members with their own personal broadband facilities

would still be able to use their equipment should the 4E network ever be unavailable.

Officers advised that in addition to providing training and support to Members, emergency out of hours cover is provided by the ICT service desk. A commitment was given that the transition to the new working practices would be fully supported.

Referring to the potential savings set out in the business case, the Committee was advised that the savings were based on an 80% take up of the new facilities by Members. Officers stated that, in terms of Members already using ICT facilities, 80% was achievable. However, with an improved service on improved facilities, it was possible that the 80% take up figure could realistically be exceeded.

The Committee sought assurances that all Councillors were aware that in future they would only be provided with an ipad and mobile telephone. Officers stated that in addition to the ipad and telephone, Members would receive a keyboard, a mouse and a wireless printer. Additionally, ICT facilities would continue to be provided in both the Members rooms in City Hall and County Hall.

The Committee asked what would be done with the decommissioned equipment retrieved from Councillors. Officers stated that any re-usable kit would be reallocated. Other equipment would be 'bought-back' by the Council's supplier under a scheme whereby all the component pieces of the equipment are reused or recycled. The Council would then receive payment for that kit.

Further discussion took place regarding the timescales for the implementation of the project, and in particular whether the training to Members could be delivered prior to the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2013. The Chairperson suggested that a Committee Task and Finish Group be established to discuss the roll-out of the project. Members of the Committee also suggested that the paperless trial of full Council meetings be extended in the meantime.

It was acknowledged that changes to the Council Procedure Rules, agreed at the Constitution Committee on 19 December 2012, would be trialled over three months from March 2013. This

trial would overlap with the anticipated changes to Members ICT provision. It was further acknowledged that some printing will still be required as there will be legitimate exceptions to a paperless system, such as Cabinet Members copies of replies to questions. The Committee felt, however, that some sort of visual aid of the proceedings at Council meetings would be of assistance to all Members.

At the conclusion of the discussion the Committee formed a unanimous view which agreed that there was a clear business case for the proposed scheme. The Committee thanked Officers from ICT and from Legal and Democratic Services for their assistance.

RESOLVED – That:

- (1) the Business Case for the preferred option as set out in Appendix 1 to the report is proven;
- (2) the Chairperson write to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Business and Local Economy on behalf of the Committee recommending that the preferred option for the delivery of ICT facilities to Members be adopted.