

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE:

19 JUNE 2013

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

AGENDA ITEM: 5

PAPERLESS COUNCIL PROPOSAL

Appendix A to this report contains information which is exempt from publication under paragraphs 14 (information relating to financial or business affairs) and 21 (public interest test) of Schedule 12 A part 4 of the Local Government Act 1972.

It is viewed in the public interest to treat Appendix A as exempt from publication. The rationale for this is that in order for the Authority to be able to effectively evaluate spending proposals it requires third parties to provide commercial information which they may not do if they thought such information would be made publicly available. The adverse impact on contractual negotiations due to such disclosure would result in a less effective use of public money. Therefore on balance, it is submitted that the public interest in maintaining exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Reason for this Report

1. To inform the Committee of the outcomes of the Member Survey of ICT options, to consider the revised costings and to agree the way forward.

Background

2. The Council's Corporate Plan 2013-17 includes the commitment to look at "new ways of delivering services" and specifically mentions the example of using technology to assist the Authority in becoming a "paperless council", which would generate savings on paper and printing costs.
3. The Democratic Services Committee has previously established a Task and Finish Group to consider the current provision of ICT facilities to Members and proposals for moving to a paperless council via the provision of new technology. The Task and Finish Group reported back to the full Committee in January 2013 and recommendations were made subsequently to Council on 28 March 2013. At this meeting, Council resolved *"that the report be referred back to the Democratic Services*

Committee to allow for further consideration of the proposals in light of Members views.”

Issues

4. The Democratic Services Committee Task and Finish Group was reconvened in April 2013 and agreed that further information was required before a way forward could be agreed in relation to future ICT provision for Members.
5. The Task and Finish Group proposed that all Members would be asked to complete a questionnaire stating their preferred ICT option. This would take into account the determinations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales in its most recent Annual Report, which provides that a Local Authority must provide individual members such support as it deems necessary, including IT equipment, to enable members to fulfil their duties.
6. The questionnaire set out the following five ICT options for Members to consider:
 - i) The original proposal – tablet device, basic mobile phone, low volume home printer, but otherwise paperless.
 - ii) As Option i) above, but replacing a basic mobile phone with a smartphone.
 - iii) Bring own device, council supplies connectivity software. Also paperless.
 - iv) Keep existing ICT provision (laptop, home broadband, printing of all council documents, home phone line).
 - v) Any other option, which Members were asked to detail.
7. The survey was conducted in May 2013 and 73 members responded. For modelling purposes, an assumption has been made that the remaining two Members who did not respond will retain their current position.
8. Members took the opportunity to express a wide variety of requirements, which reflect their different needs. This has resulted in some additional challenges for the project:
 - Some Members have chosen to have higher levels of delivery than originally proposed, which increases the costs. An analysis of the costs based on each Member's individual needs is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.
 - Provision of different ICT solutions removes the savings expected from moving to a 'one size fits all' model which would have resulted in reduced support costs. However, this would not provide all Members with the best solution for them.

- The options selected have resulted in some Members wishing to retain printing and phone line facilities which has reduced the level of savings predicted.
9. The new cost of provision is estimated at £423,278 over 5 years. This provides a saving of £68,782 compared to the existing position. However, a sensitivity analysis suggests that costs could increase and will be dependent on the actual ICT equipment provided at the time of equipment set up. In addition to the financial savings identified, the provision of the latest technology will result in improved efficiency with Members better able to carry out their ward roles.
 10. There will be an individual assessment for each Member before any new equipment is installed and any reasonable adjustment requirements will be identified. This will ensure that any equality issues are addressed at the earliest possible stage. Full training in the use of new equipment will also be provided so that Members are content to access and work with documents in an electronic format.

Reasons for Recommendations

11. To enable the Committee to make recommendations to Council on the future provision of ICT for Members to ensure that they are fully able to fulfil their duties and to contribute to the Corporate Plan commitment to look at new ways of delivering services through the development of a paperless council.

Legal Implications

12. The Committee's statutory terms of reference include keeping under review the provision of resources made available to the Head of Democratic Services to discharge democratic services functions. They also include making reports and recommendations to Council in relation to the adequacy of such provision. The Council has a duty to ensure value for money when procuring goods and services.

Financial Implications

13. The business case which reflects the results of the recent survey of member requirements indicates a potential saving of £68,782 over a five year period. This includes costs arising from the capitalisation of the cost of the new equipment in the current year.
14. As set out in the Budget Report, this would be undertaken as an invest to save scheme with the initial cost of the equipment and other facilities being financed from reductions in the cost of printing and other associated revenue budgets.
15. There is a risk that should member requirements change then this will impact on the model and could result in increased costs. If this occurs

then any additional costs would have to be met from within existing Council budgets or by a drawdown from reserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

1. note the contents of this report, including the financial analysis.
2. recommend to Council to delegate authority to the Interim Head of Democratic Services, in consultation with the Chair of Democratic Services Committee and the Section 151 Officer, to implement the provision of each Member's preferred option for ICT equipment and facilities.
3. agree that, further to the implementation of recommendation (2) above, all Committee and Council papers and routine correspondence will be circulated electronically unless a Member makes a specific request to Committee & Member Services or the Cabinet Support Office to receive hard copies of documentation.

ANDREW KERR
INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
13 June 2013

The following appendix is attached to this report:

Appendix A: Costs Model (Exempt from publication)

The following background papers are relevant to this report:

- Council Report, 28 March 2013 – Democratic Services Committee Proposal: ICT Provision for Members
- Democratic Services Committee Report, 22 January 2013 – ICT Provision for Members: Business Case
- Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales Annual Report 2012

