
AGENDA ITEM:

NETWORKED COUNCILLOR ICT PROJECT 2014/15

REPORT OF THE COUNTY CLERK AND MONITORING OFFICER

Reason for report

1. To update the Committee on progress with implementing the resolution of full Council on the 27 June 2013 to provide ICT devices (Tablets and smart phones) to save money and ensure proper up to date support for Members and to enable them to be less reliant on paper and work in a more mobile way.

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 become a "paperless council", which would generate savings on paper and printing costs. Spending on printing reports and papers for Members has also been over budget for most of 2013/14. Spending and the administrative costs associated with Members' land telephones and broadband services has also been of concern.
3. As a consequence, on 27 June 2013, the Council agreed the Democratic Services Committee's recommendations for the provision of ICT mobile device equipment for all members following a Member Survey and noting the proposed savings this would provide. A project team was established to deliver the equipment sponsored by the County Clerk and Monitoring officer and comprising officers from Democratic Services, ICT, Finance and information Security.
4. The Project was set up to start in September 2013. However, it was suspended following a ruling from the UK Cabinet Office which regulates ICT security across the UK public sector. The Council is accredited to connect to the national Public Sector Network (PSN). This network joins a variety of public sector and national government agencies together, enabling data to be shared securely. The UK Cabinet Office has a new 'Zero Tolerance' policy for

Public Sector Network (PSN) connectivity in relation to mobile devices. As such the project was delayed whilst the Council validated the proposed members ICT model with the Cabinet Office.

5. The Project was further delayed in April 2014 by technical problems regarding the non-compatibility of the Tablet device with the encryption software issued by the Council and an unrelated issue regarding the use of USB devices and the compatibility of the Council's security/protection system 'safe-end'. These issues were resolved during May 2014.
6. The delay allowed more time to significantly improve the specification enabling the Tablet to access the council's network whilst on the move. Initially the Tablet would only have worked on council premises or at Member's homes. They now work wherever you can get a mobile signal or access wireless securely.
7. The "Cardiff Networked Councillor" Project was launched on Tuesday 24 June 2014. The launch included two well attended training events provided by Public i. The events were designed as workshops to provide Members with an overview of digital engagement and the different ways in which it can be used to connect with the public and local communities. The objectives for the sessions were to support members to:
 - understand the aims of the Networked Councillor Project, and how it fits with the Council's aim of becoming a paper-light council;
 - understand the key public engagement priorities for Cardiff Council in relation to the "One Council" approach
 - have an understanding of the different ways in which to engage the public and local communities
 - have confidence that it is possible to actively manage a digital presence and set boundaries, even if the skills to do so have not yet been developed
8. It was agreed that the Project would run for a 4 month period with an initial target to connect 35 councillors with the new devices. Because the project was being introduced mid-term it was agreed that councillors would have the option to retain existing ICT equipment including existing computers at home, laptops and landline telephones.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9. The business case indicates a potential saving of £56,204 over a three year period. The cost of the new equipment has been capitalised in the current year. As set out in the Budget report, this has been 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.

DELIVERY PLAN

10. The Project has now achieved its initial target to enrol 35 councillors. 44 Tablets have now been successfully delivered with a further 5 on order and awaiting dates from the individual councillors concerned.
11. 14 councillors have decided not to participate in the Project preferring to remain with the ICT equipment originally assigned to them. 11 Councillors have yet to indicate a preference and have been contacted again before the Project closes at the end of November. A verbal update will be available at the meeting
12. All Members have been offered an initial set up meeting to ensure continuity of service and support as the new equipment is provided. Members have had to return existing ICT equipment in exchange for the new equipment.
13. An updated Members protocol has been devised to deal with damaged and lost equipment, appropriate insurance provision and compliance with security standards and data protection.
14. The Project has also reviewed individual telephone connections for members with several agreeing to cease using land based telephones preferring to switch to use their own smart phones or a basic council handset with reduced costs. Similar action to make savings has been taken where possible to take out council funded broadband connections with members now using their personal broadband connections on a secure basis.

CONCLUSION

15. Members remain committed to working in a more efficient mobile manner making increasing use of new technology and the internet. Delaying the implementation to deal with initial technical issues and ensure a PSN secure specification has allowed much greater flexibility in how the devices are used. Overall the project has been a success with well over 66% of councillors participating resulting in improved support to them and savings to the council.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee notes the current position and agrees to the Project being closed on the 30 November 2014..

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following background papers are relevant to this report:

- Council Report, 27 June 2013 - Paperless Council Proposal
- Democratic Services Committee Report 19 June 2013 – Paperless Council Proposal
- 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