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## **REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

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### **ICT AND AGILE WORKING FACILITIES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS**

#### **Reason for this Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the planned options for the provision of ICT and agile working facilities for Elected Members following the 2022 Local Government Elections.

#### **Background**

2. Following the 2017 Local Government Elections, Elected Members were provided with a range of ICT equipment including laptops and smartphones. Returning Elected Members were able to retain some of their existing ICT which included printers and other devices which would no longer be supported or replaced in the event of failure.
3. At the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, the age and wide range of equipment that had been provided for Elected Members created a significant challenge in respect of ensuring that the security and technical requirements of remote working and meetings could be achieved. Many of the devices did not have cameras or microphones both of which were essential to enable participation in Microsoft Teams meetings. Some of the older devices were also incapable of having their operating system software upgraded which was a key factor as the rapidly evolving software was dependant on the more recent upgrades to provide the necessary security. Many Elected Members were subsequently required to replace their ICT systems to enable them to undertake their councillor roles remotely.
4. The implementation of Office 365 provided them with a simple method of accessing their council emails, calendars and the intranet from their smartphones. The rapid development of smartphone software has required many of the mobile phones issued in 2017 to be upgraded as the operating system of the device could no longer be updated. This prevented the latest versions Office 365 applications from being installed rendering the smartphone to just a mobile phone. In recent months approximately 20 smartphones have had to be replaced because of this issue.
5. The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales (IRPW) has determined that:  
  
“Each authority, through its Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its elected 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, email and internet facilities giving electronic access to appropriate information.”

## Issues

### Laptop Devices

6. The Council predominantly operates Microsoft and Android devices which minimises issues of compatibility and support. It is proposed that these types of devices be offered to Elected Members following the 2022 Local Government Elections.
7. The intention is to provide one of the three computer options which will maximise the opportunity for agile working. The three options are shown at **Appendix A** and include:
  - a. A Dell Latitude 7320 which is Dell's equivalent to Microsoft Surface Pro and includes detachable keyboard and active pen. The Committees Team have been using a similar version of this device since the start of the pandemic and have found them to be very versatile, agile and reliable.
  - b. A Dell Latitude 5520 with a touch screen which is a larger laptop with good performance.
  - c. A Dell Latitude 5420 with a touch screen which is slightly lighter and more portable than current devices.
8. Each device will have an appropriate carrying case and a stereo headset with a boom microphone. It is anticipated that the new devices will also be pre-installed with essential software including the Microsoft Office 365 applications and Modern.gov.

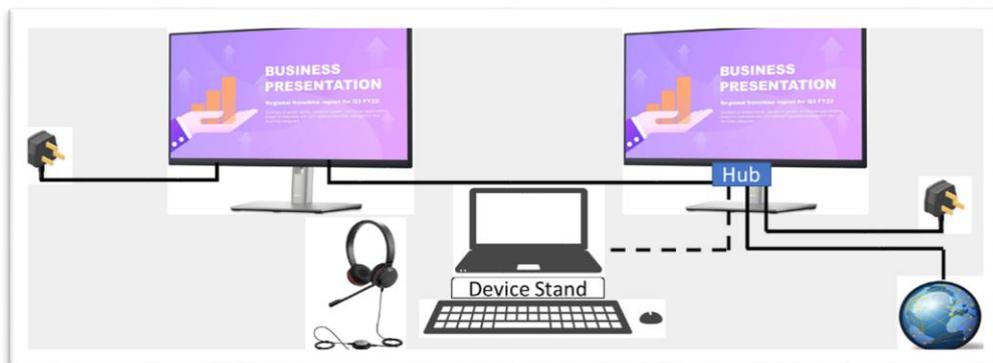
### The "Office" at Home

9. The pandemic also emphasised the need for Elected Member to have a suitable "office" at home. These facilities need to comply with the Council's Health and Safety requirements and the need to carry out a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessment.
10. To support these requirements, it is proposed that Elected Members be provided with a Dell 24" Monitor which includes a combined dock. This will connect to a mains power source and have a single cable connection to the laptop device providing power and other services. The built-in hub can also be connected to an internet connection using an ethernet cable to a router. Alternatively, the laptop device can be connected via wi-fi as necessary. A wireless keyboard and mouse will be provided which can remain in-situ when the laptop device is used for working outside of the "office" at home. This will mean that only one cable will need to be plugged into, or unplugged from, the laptop device when switching between home and agile working. The diagram below shows the basic configuration for an "office" at home.



### County Hall Offices

- The configuration of the Cabinet Member, Committee Chairs and other offices in County Hall will be a similar to that planned for the “office” at home but with an additional 24” Monitor and a dedicated ethernet connection to the council’s network. There will still only be one cable that has to be connected or disconnected when switching between office and agile working.



- The common work areas including the Members Room and the Library will have a combination of configurations that will support the agile working devices and provide an in-situ Personal Computer (PC) so in the event of a Councillor not bringing their laptop device into the office they can use the PC to log onto their Council ICT account.

### Smartphones

- The provision of a suitable smartphone has been based on the functional capability of the device and the likelihood that it will have to be replaced during the 2022-2027 term of office. To manage reasonable costs the Samsung A12 will be offered to all Members as the primary smartphone. It is planned to have key software including Office 365 and the “Peoplesafe” and Cardiff apps pre-installed on these devices. A full description of the Smartphone and its specification is shown at **Appendix A**.
- Given the flexibility of the Office 365 it would be possible for Elected Members to use their own smartphones for their Council business. However, this has personal security implications as their personal telephone number would be placed in the public domain when they made calls to constituents or published their number as their point of contact for their constituents.

### Other additional Items

15. Initial discussions have been held with the Assistant Director, County Estates to determine the additional items that can be provided to ensure the Health & Safety needs of elected members can be supported when working in their “office” at home. This may include the provision of desks, device stands, adjustable office chairs and footrests. Newly Elected Members may also require suitable adaptations to be provided to support any disabilities, but these will not be able to be identified until after the elections.

#### Transition arrangements

16. Following the start of the pre-election period on 21 March 2022 any Elected Members who will not be standing for re-election will be invited to return all of their existing ICT equipment prior to the Election. This will enable any reasonably new devices to be cleansed of data and rebuilt for re-use as necessary. Those devices which are not suitable for re-use will be passed to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractor to cleanse and recycle the device.
17. It will be a priority to provide newly elected members with their ICT account and equipment as soon as possible following their election. The creation of new ICT accounts is dependent on the newly elected councillor providing their personal information. It is essential to have a personnel account created within the Council which then enables an ICT account to be provided. Measures will be taken to advise candidates of the need to provide their personal information as soon as possible after they are elected. It may take up to 4 working days to create an ICT account for a newly Elected Member following receipt of their personal information.
18. Those Elected Members who are not successfully re-elected will be requested to return all of their ICT equipment as soon as possible. These devices will be assessed and similar to those not standing for re-election, former Members will have their devices cleansed and re-used or recycled.
19. Returning Members will have the opportunity to continue to use their existing equipment and ICT accounts until all of the newly Elected member have received their equipment. Once this is completed the returning member will be able to refresh their equipment to the same level as the newly Elected Members.

#### ICT training

20. Newly Elected Members will be required to undertake appropriate training in the use of their devices for attending meetings remotely, logging member enquiries, access the council’s E-Learning facilities in the Cardiff Academy and managing their data as a data controller. All these topics will be included in the Member Induction following the Election in 2022.

#### Funding arrangements

21. The costs for delivering the ICT requirements for 79 Elected Members is significant and cannot be achieved solely from the Democratic Services budget or reserves. Therefore, a capital bid of £130k which is planned to be supplemented by £40k from the Democratic Services reserve was made in October.

22. The rapid development of smartphone technology has been evidenced in the last 2 years by the issued smartphones becoming obsolete in approximately 3-4 years. To reduce the impact of replacing these devices mid-term, a further capital bid of £10k with a further supplement of £10k from the Democratic Services reserve has been planned.

### **Financial Implications**

23. The body of the report provides details of the requirements for and intended sources of funding for the provision of ICT and agile working facilities for Elected Members.
24. All costs will require an identified funding source and to be monitored and contained within the respective funding sources and budgets.

### **Legal Implications**

25. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for overseeing the democratic services functions of the Council, ensuring this work is adequately resourced; and reporting to full Council accordingly.
26. The definition of 'Democratic Services functions' includes the provision of support and advice to each member of the authority in carrying out the role of member of the authority.
27. In determining how to exercise its functions, the Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: <https://gov.wales/local-government-measure-2011-guidance> (chapter 3)

### **RECOMMENDATION**

28. The Committee is requested to note the content of the report and provide appropriate direction on the suitability of the plans for providing ICT and agile working facilities for Elected Members.

**GARY JONES**  
**HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**  
**23 November 2021**

Appendix A ICT Equipment Options

Background Papers: None