

REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 16 JULY 2014

PORTFOLIO: PEOPLE AND TECHNOLOGY

REPORT FROM HEAD OF LEGAL, ESTATES AND MEMBER SERVICES

SUBJECT: USE OF IPADS FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS

1 DECISIONS BEING RECOMMENDED

That it be recommended to Council:-

- 1.1 That, apart from the issuing of hard copy summons and the making of separate arrangements where necessary to accord with equalities/disability discrimination legislation, all Members of the Council receive business documentation via email links. Specifically that:-
 - Agenda pages only (not associated reports) be posted out first class via the Royal Mail or made available at the Council offices to appointees only in accordance with legislative requirement. Separately, all Members (including appointees) to receive an email link to all agendas and reports as they are published.
 - Email links to the various business documents identified in paragraph 3.6 below be issued to all Members of the Council.
 - Any ad hoc Member correspondence received at the Council offices be posted out first class via Royal Mail as appropriate.
- 1.2 That it be noted that a Government Order providing that, where a Member consents, a summons can be sent to an electronic address in electronic form, is imminent.
- 1.3 That the Portfolio Holder for People and Technology, in consultation with officers, monitor the new arrangements and address any issues that arise.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Each Member has use of a Council provided iPad to accord with ICT Security Policy and Practice. It had always been the intention that, once the iPads were in use for the purpose of emails, the opportunity for broadening out usage for other Council business papers, such as the receipt of agendas, minutes and reports, would be explored.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 From a review of possibilities it is clear that, subject to according with certain legislative requirements, the iPads could facilitate a significant move away from the provision of hard copy paper documentation.

Meeting Agendas

- 3.2 In terms of meetings legislation, the only business documentation required to be in hard copy form are Council, Committee and Sub-Committee agendas (not the associated reports or, indeed, the Minutes). The agenda pages form the summons which must be sent to every appropriate Member at their usual residence. There is, however, provision within the Local Government Act 1972 for a Member to give notice in writing to the Proper Officer for summonses to be sent to an alternative address to the Member's usual residence. The summons must specify the business to be transacted at a meeting in sufficient detail.
- 3.3 At the current time all Members receive copies of the agendas plus reports for all meetings. This ensures that all Members are aware of Council business and also proves of value at forums such as group meetings where it is useful for all attendees to have sight of all Council business paperwork.
- 3.4 In terms of moving to a more paperless approach and reducing dispatch costs, hard copies of agendas (and not the associated reports) could be posted out via Royal Mail to the Members of the body in question only (to meet legislative requirements) and, at the same time, links to the agenda and reports could be emailed out to all Members to be accessed via the Member iPad. Members could also give notice in writing to the Proper Officer that summonses should be sent to either the Civic Suite or the Council Offices in Rochford, saving on postage costs. There would remain a need to have some hard copies of agendas, reports and minutes available given a legal obligation that these are open for inspection by the public and the value of having some spares for the public at meetings.
- 3.5 In association with this subject Members should be aware that a Government Order providing that, where a Member consents, a summons can be sent to an electronic address in electronic form is imminent.

Other Business Documentation

- 3.6 As with agendas and reports, there is no reason why the other documents associated with Member business cannot be linked to an email sent to Member iPads. Specifically, these documents would be: the Weekly list; the Parish list; the Members' Bulletin; Notices of Executive Decisions and the Key Decisions Document. It is also considered that the Members' diary and filofax pages can be issued electronically via the Member iPads. Some documentation, such as exempt Committee reports, communication on Member Allowances and the Members' Bulletin will, in time, be linked to a bespoke intranet location rather than the Council's Committee Management Information System.
- 3.7 An appropriate exemption to electronic issue would be copies of certain planning applications issued to specific Ward Members. Given their size, at the current time it would be appropriate for some of these to be provided in

hard copy form. The possibility of providing all planning applications via iPads is under consideration.

General Post

- 3.8 Whilst many residents post letters direct to their Councillor's address, there are occasions when correspondence for individual Members is received at the Council offices. Such ad-hoc correspondence could be posted out first class to Members.

Way Forward

- 3.9 A key question is whether a position that all Members utilise the iPad facility for Council business purposes should be taken, or whether there should be an opt out arrangement. In terms of meetings law, a Member cannot opt out of hard copy deliveries of the agendas (summons) relating to bodies to which they are appointed. By the same token, a Member cannot rely on meetings related legislation to insist upon physical delivery of any document other than the agenda (summons) of bodies to which they are appointed. Resource implications can be associated with any part arrangement. Notwithstanding the above, there can be circumstances where a Member has a disability or condition which may require the Council to consider alternative arrangements (see equalities section below).
- 3.10 In preparation for moving forward the Portfolio Holder, Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, has been trialling the electronic receipt of business paperwork on iPads with Member colleagues. The trial has been successful and we are now in a position whereby electronic delivery can be rolled out. A benefit of the trial has been that Members have assisted each other with questions. Separately, specific Member training has been held on the use of Topnotes software which allows Members to annotate electronic documents, and to navigate quickly through large, electronic documents and to file electronic documents in individual folders that can be easily accessed for meetings. The Portfolio Holder, in consultation with officers, could monitor new arrangements and address any issues that arise.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Should there be a full move to electronic delivery it is estimated that the issue of hard copy agendas and elements of correspondence to Members via first class post would be approximately £2,981.16 over the period of a year. This figure would reduce if Members opted to have summons left at the Council offices. The cost of using a courier under the current arrangements is approximately £7,504 per annum.
- 4.2 Notwithstanding electronic means of delivery, occasions may still arise when use of a courier would be applicable.

- 4.3 In terms of in-house activity, assuming all Member involvement, a move from issuing hard copy documentation to issuing electronic links to all Members is unlikely to involve much change.

5 EQUALITIES

- 5.1 There may be cases where a Member has a disability or condition which requires the Council to consider alternative arrangements for providing business papers. In such circumstances, following receipt of a request, the Council will arrange for an assessment to be carried out to identify an appropriate suitable alternative to ensure compliance with the Council's duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: _____



Head of Legal Estates & Member Services

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact John Bostock (Member Services Manager) or Sonia Worthington (Committee Administrator) on:-

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.