

Providing Members with the tools to conduct business electronically

Cabinet Member **Cllr Brenda Hull**
Responsible Officer **Head of Business Information Services**

Reason for Report: To provide an update of the work of the Member Digital Transformation Group

RECOMMENDATION(S): That Councillors support Channel Shift to using electronic devices to receive agendas and minutes for meetings.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The shift to carrying out all council business online will be a necessary move to reduce costs and meeting the changing patterns of residents' needs. The Corporate Plan will need to be revised in the autumn of 2015 and both reducing costs and meeting the needs of an increasing online resident will need to feature in any rewrite of the plan

Financial Implications: Funding may be required to supply Councillors with ICT Managed systems

Legal Implications: none arising from the report other than a recent change to legislation now allows agendas and minutes to be sent to members electronically if requested rather than a requirement to be sent by post.

Risk Assessment: not supporting Channel Shift will lose opportunities for efficiency gains and delay our move to transact all business online by 2017

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Continued budget reductions for local government demand a fundamental change to the way councils do business. To meet this challenge Mid Devon is aiming to provide all services on line by 2017. Digital Transformation for Members forms part of the change. Also known as 'channel shift' the project aims to do as much as possible online or electronically to contribute to efficiencies and savings in the long term. Investment in systems and devices will be needed to achieve electronic delivery
- 1.2 Members are required to use the @middevon.gov.uk email system and the intranet for other information in order to deal with both council business and residents' communications. As from May 2015 all expense claims will be made online using 'MyView'.
- 1.3 Previously Councillors have either used their own computer equipment or been supplied with a completely managed system by MDDC ICT Services. Councillors can also use the computers located in the Members Room and in Member Services.

2.0 **The Local Government (Electronic Communications)(England) Order 2015**

2.1 Currently Minutes and agendas and any other papers are posted to Councillors. The annual costs for this are a minimum of £4,500. (Paper, ink, officer time, postage, envelope, included. Printer costs are excluded e.g. % of support and maintenance agreement). There is a time dependency on the overland mail system. The government has announced during February the intention to end the requirement to serve agendas by post thereby removing barriers to digital working practices.

2.2 Section 2b iii of the The Local Government (Electronic Communications)(England) Order 2015 states

‘where the member has given consent for the summons to be transmitted in electronic form to a particular electronic address (and consent has not been withdrawn), sending it in electronic form to that address.’

This removes the obligation to send out paper versions where consent has been received.

3.0 **Modern.Gov**

3.1 As part of the officer move towards doing all business online, Member Services have also been modernising their working practices, creating efficiencies and allowing a reduction in staffing levels. This is happening through the implementation of Modern.Gov, a modern electronic system combining automated preparation for meetings, web publication, alerts and reminders for authors to produce reports

3.2 Meeting preparations are driven through this system as it enables Members and the public to easily access information from the web site. Where confidential items (Part II) are used security is applied and members will need to log in (using usual id and password) to access these reports.

3.3 **The benefits of the Modern.Gov system include:-**

- Automated web publication
- Automated print room (if required) notification
- Automated meeting material including agenda pack
- Workflow system to improve quality management of arrangements
- Automated reminder to officers issuing reports
- Ability for Members and officers to access through portable devices
- Offline mobile working
- Self-service for public – searches and auto notification of new material in ward or on specified subject matter

- Self-service for members to manage their affairs – register of interests, gifts and hospitalities, apologies, submitting motions and scrutiny topics
- Management reports – attendance statistics, election results, declarations at meetings, officer decisions
- Exempt items only published on secure site with Member/officer log in required.

4.0 Mobile Devices, Tablets and other Computers

- 4.1 Councillors currently use a computer or mobile device to access emails, intranet and any other electronic information. Frequently Councillors have more than one device, eg computer, tablet and smartphone. They can either, provide their own device(s) and receive an annual amount to contribute to the cost of running their devices, or use a council provided device.
- 4.2 There is an increasing demand for more mobility in accessing the internet and that is giving rise to an increased use of, and demand for tablets. The advantage of using a tablet is that it can fit in a bag or capacious pocket and be used during meetings instead of paper. Tablets also provide Councillors with flexible working opportunities. Tablets can access the council systems in Phoenix House using WiFi.
- 4.3 The Council is required to use a number of different systems to undertake its statutory functions and undertake business in a secure and professional manner. Dealing with the interfaces between the various systems and the underlying technology dictates that we use windows based systems. For reasons of compatibility, security and provision of support there is a preference for members to be supplied with a windows based tablet.
- 4.4 The costs of the expected provision (Windows or Apple), from May 2015 are estimated as follows:-

	Windows	Apple
Windows tablet + one year warranty	£400	
iPad		£400
Apple care for iPad with £40 excess (four years)		£400
Monthly broadband @ £15 pm (four years)	£780	£780
Additional charges each	£5	£5
Microsoft Licencing (licences to access servers)	£90	£90
Citrix Key fob	£80	£80
Windows only tablet docking station with screen, keyboard and mouse	£200	
	£1,155	£955

Mid Devon District Council currently only has three Councillors being provided with fully managed system. All other councillors prefer to use their own computers and mobile devices, and claim the annual £75 towards costs. Likewise these Councillors also claim the basic broadband cost.

- 4.5 After the elections it is proposed of offer each new member either
- a. A Tablet (windows or apple) or
 - b. Allowances for members to supply their own equipment including having available a device for use at meetings
- 4.6 Any proposal will need to be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel

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List of Background Papers: none