

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 September 2013

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet

#### **1 COUNCIL AGENDAS, PRINTING AND THE INCREASED USE OF I.T.**

**To assess potential cost savings if Members and senior managers were issued with tablet devices.**

##### **1.1 Background**

1.1.1 It has previously been agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should play a key role in the evaluation of a range of value for money reviews. The Committee has been asked to look at a series of service areas to evaluate the scope for change and the potential to generate savings. Members of Overview and Scrutiny have been split into review groups to tackle the issues. The review group looking at "Council Agendas, Printing and the increased use of I.T." met on 29 July 2013 and is now able to present the findings for formal endorsement and recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

##### **1.2 Potential Cost Savings and Benefits**

1.2.1 The review group looked at the potential cost savings that could be achieved if Members and senior managers were issued with tablet devices and to cease printing committee agendas and reports within the Reprographics team. The primary benefits of paperless meetings are the financial and environmental savings made possible through a significant reduction in the amount of printed material produced for each meeting. In addition to this the e-modernisation era within local government is well underway and high on the agenda is the electronic delivery of democratic information.

1.2.2 Prior to this review being undertaken, consideration was already underway with regard to the potential upgrade of the committee management system, E-Genda. It has now been decided that the replacement will be with Modern.Gov, which offers a comprehensive range of features for supporting the democratic process in local authorities including meeting and agenda management. This software pulls all agendas into one main PDF document which would be easier for downloading onto devices. There is also a Modern.Gov tablet 'app' which could potentially be used. This would allow for straightforward access to committee papers via tablet

devices. Modern.Gov software will be purchased by the Council in January 2014, the costs of which will be met from existing budgets.

### **1.3 Use of tablet devices at other Councils**

- 1.3.1 A number of Councils nationwide have chosen to cease printing committee agendas/reports and instead have purchased electronic devices issued to all Members and senior staff. Canterbury City Council is currently trialling this and feedback to date is that using tablets is a viable alternative to paper copies. They are proposing that after the next local election in 2015, all Members will receive their agendas electronically and no paper copies will be circulated. Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells are also trialling the use of electronic devices without linking this to any savings exercise.
- 1.3.2 KCC have issued Members with tablet devices (I Pads) and feedback provided by the Democratic Services Manager at KCC is positive. In their case, the move to the use of tablets has not generated any adverse publicity. KCC's Learning and Development Unit offer 1 to 1 training sessions with Members, which has been very popular. The I Pads have the Modern.Gov application downloaded onto them so they can follow the agenda etc on their tablet. So far they have been encouraged by the number of Members viewing the papers electronically. KCC's objective is to be paperless and the move to tablets is helping to facilitate this.
- 1.3.3 Some authorities who have purchased tablet devices have come under scrutiny from residents and the media, but have been able to show that a financial saving has been generated to offset such concerns.

### **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 The purchase of devices could be made via existing I.T. procurement routes in compliance with Financial Procedure Rules.
- 1.4.2 Whilst not envisaged at this stage, should it become relevant at any point in the future, in accordance with the Council's Reorganisation, Redundancy and Redeployment Procedure, any staff who may be impacted by future recommendations arising from the review resulting from recommendations set out in this report would be consulted about any likely changes.

### **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 It is difficult to provide precise estimates of printing costs and potential savings at this stage of the review, without looking in greater detail at the time involved, on-costs, machine use/wear and tear etc. However, looking purely at the cost to the Council of the paper and use of the machinery to print committee agendas and papers, the figures are as follows:

- Paper & Click charge = approximately **£5395** per year

- 1.5.2 In addition to this, we currently distribute committee agendas/papers using an internal courier service. There are usually two hand deliveries per week to all councillors on a Tuesday and Friday. Any extra despatches or limited distributions where it would not be cost effective to use the courier are sent by royal mail. The costs of the Member courier service is approximately £7600 per year. The postage recharges were examined for the past 14 months and on average the costs of posting items to Members was **£900** per year
- 1.5.3 Looking at the minimum operational cost (e.g. without considering staff time / on-cost within the print section) for printing and distribution of committee agendas and papers, the total figure is approximately **£13,895** per year.
- 1.5.4 With regard to the purchase of tablet devices, there is a range available including Android and Apple options. The tablet devices would facilitate the replacement of printed committee documents and enable Members and senior managers to annotate documents/reports, send/receive emails, make notes, access the internet etc. If we were to purchase 60-70 tablets for Members and senior staff at the lower to mid range tablet this would cost in the region of £16-£20k. This includes a 3 year warranty which is the expected life of the device due to the pace at which technology advances.
- 1.5.5 Based on the estimated cost of printing and distribution (£13,895) over the expected life of the tablet device (3 years), we are looking at a total cost of £41,685 under the current arrangements over a three year period. If we deduct the purchase price and warranty costs, the **initial** assessment is that potential savings over three years (excluding the loss of investment interest on the capital expenditure) could be between **£21K** and **£25K**.
- 1.5.6 The purchase of tablets will need to be evaluated as a fast-track capital plan item which would appropriately be reported to Cabinet alongside these recommendations.

## **1.6 Additional Potential Savings**

- 1.6.1 Additional savings could be generated by the use of tablets by Management Team. For example, Management Team papers are currently printed out and provided to all members of Management Team and a number of officers. Some members of Management Team are provided with laptops, which would no longer be required if tablets were in use.
- 1.6.2 There are many further potential savings associated with this project as referred above. However these would be time consuming to cost in detail as a review of current practices would be required. Given that the business case is demonstrated by the evaluation undertaken this far, Management Team feel that there is sufficient base data to enable a robust value for money case without the need for further evaluation.

## **1.7 Risk Assessment**

1.7.1 N/A

## **1.8 Equality Impact Assessment**

1.8.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

## **1.9 Recommendations**

1.9.1 In the light of the potential financial savings to be made, as set out in the report to the Review Group meeting held on 29 July 2013, the Review Group recommends that the change from printed Council papers should be supported in principle subject to the following:

- That, on an exceptional basis only, printed agendas continue to be supplied to those Members with no email access
- More significant documents that sometimes accompany agenda papers (e.g. annual statements of accounts, local plan publications etc) continue to be made available in hard copy
- A time limited transitional period be established during which printed agendas continue to be made available, to allow Members to become familiar with the use of new technology
- The training for Members on the use of the new technology be made available via practical sessions involving small groups
- Management Team explore any additional savings to be made via the available new technology

1.9.2 The Management Team should establish an officer review group to assess the potential impact of such a change on the remit and role of the Reprographics Section, including the possibility that the section could undertake further commercial printing work, printing for local community groups, and/or shared services with other councils, in order to generate additional income. This would need to include a review of printing charges for external work.

1.9.3 A Capital Plan evaluation be undertaken regarding the purchase of tablets as a fast track item and the results of this evaluation be reported to the Cabinet alongside these recommendations.

Background papers:

contact: Gill Fox

Nil

Julie Beilby  
Chief Executive

<b>Screening for equality impacts:</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Answer</b>	<b>Explanation of impacts</b>
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	yes	Support will be provided to ensure that those using the tablets are able to access all information, papers etc. Any subsequent staff impacts will be evaluated via Personnel.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	no	As above
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		As above

*In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.*