

AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was held on 26 October 2012.

PRESENT: Councillors Brunton (Chair), Councillors McPartland, G Purvis, P Purvis (as substitute for Harvey) and J Sharrocks and P Sharrocks.

OFFICERS: J Bennington, A Crawford and S Reynolds.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were submitted on behalf of Councillors Harvey, J Hobson, Hubbard and Mawston.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at this point of the meeting.

12/2 MINUTES - AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

The minutes of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel held on 19 September 2012 were submitted and approved as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor McPartland in the list of Apologies for Absence.

12/3 PAPERLESS COMMITTEE MEETINGS - FURTHER INFORMATION

The Scrutiny Officer submitted an introductory report and advised the Panel of ongoing research to identify a suitable authority in the local area that had made sufficient progress on the issue to provide meaningful feedback and information on results. The Panel was advised that further information was awaited from Scarborough Borough Council regarding their current arrangements for paperless committee meetings and significant savings of £400,000 which had apparently been achieved.

The Chair welcomed, Sylvia Reynolds, Senior Resources Office in the Members Office who gave a presentation of current IT reviews and certain matters to be taken into consideration in pursuing a paperless authority.

The scrutiny topic was considered timely given the Council's current Desk Top Strategy and Application Review with the aim of providing a common hardware/software platform solution, reducing costs and avoiding duplication. It was hoped that such an approach would ensure common standards, purchasing in bulk to reduce costs and standardisation of equipment dependent on an Officer's role. Identifying the most appropriate device for Members to operate and undertake their role was being examined as part of such a review.

An indication was given of the timetable for the review between June and December 2012. Phase 1 had focussed on gathering information and undertaking an upgrade of Citrix refresh and enhanced data storage. It was intended that Phase 2 from January 2013 onwards would include the design of a future Desktop Architecture, procure new devices and network storage updates as required. From 2014 onwards with common platforms the Council would be able to adapt more swiftly to new ICT innovations.

In pursuing drivers for change it was considered important to determine if current devices were fit for purpose and if they met Members' needs in their changing roles; how accessing information had changed; and if it was cost effective.

Factors to be taken into account as part of the review included how Members undertook their role, changing working cultures, increasing IT skills, individual preferences whilst at the same time endeavouring to achieve standardisation, pace of technological change and learning of IT skills, appropriate systems providing information security and availability of required resources.

In response to Members' suggestions to provide a demonstration of different devices the Panel was advised of a number of considerations such as providing sufficient memory

capacity, funding, system security and access to Council information, different attainment levels of IT skills and how a paperless authority could be enforced.

Information was provided on current usage which showed that 43 home devices had currently been issued (18 laptops) 65% of which were less than two years old. Whilst figures demonstrated low figures for access through VPN from home during January to October 2012 there had been increased use of web mail and personal devices such as smart phones/iPads.

An indication was given of the limitations of using iPads in terms of accessing Council databases such as the Egenda system for committee information, reports and minutes; Lotus Notes; Onestop database; and access to the internet.

Members referred to other factors to be taken into account when considering devices such as dexterity in handling a small keyboard, portability and ease of access.

Information was provided on average costs of devices such as PC (£460), Laptop (£630), Tablet (£850) and Blackberry (£150). Reference was also made to additional costs relating to such items as Broadband connection, possible subscription service, annual insurance and licence costs.

Members acknowledged the issues to be taken into account in developing new ways of working such as:

- Possible reliance on Members bringing devices to meetings;
- Use of technology during meetings;
- Co-ordination in terms of speed, skills, taking notes and maintaining concentration;
- Reliance and availability of networks/Wi-Fi services;
- Potential enforcement issues;
- potentially adverse publicity at a time of significant budget cuts.

It was acknowledged that the need for security in relation to personal safety whilst carrying devices, data security and loss/theft or damage were important considerations.

Members suggested that it would be useful to have a demonstration of different devices.

AGREED as follows:-

1. That the Officers be thanked for the information provided which would be incorporated into the overall review.
2. That information be provided on the different appropriate hand-held portable electronic devices.
3. That further information be provided on details of other local authorities which had introduced a system of paperless committee meetings.
4. That the next meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel be on the basis of a paperless meeting.