

SUBMISSION TO THE STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 22nd March 2011

Agenda item: 6

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SUBMISSION BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEMBERS ICT TASK GROUP FOR THE STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Elected Members' ICT – First year review

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a summary of the first year of operation of the revised Members' ICT scheme.

2. Background

- 2.1 Since 2003 the council had offered members a number of different ways of obtaining ICT. Initially this had been planned to be just a handful of options, but over the years it had grown to around twelve different options. When all of the schemes were taken into account the annual cost of providing ICT to members was around £21,000 or an average of £370.43. The cost of each member ranged from £0.00 through to £837.94 per year.
- 2.2 During the summer of 2009 the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee formed a task group to review Members' ICT and as a group first met in September 2009, reporting to the full committee in October 2009 with a report being presented to the Cabinet in December 2009.
- 2.3 The report described the concept of the Technology Fund which took into account factors such as whether a member was both a County and District Member, lived with another Member or had no use of ICT in order to create an opening balance. From that opening balance members could draw down services from the council depending on their requirements and at the end of the year they would be paid the balance of their technology fund in the form of an allowance.
- 2.5 All Members were written to in March 2010 and were advised of their options and were asked to choose their options for the forthcoming year.
- 2.6 As this was the first time that Members had been actively communicated with since 2003 there had been a significant amount of change. The highlights of the changes were:
- The number of members not using any ICT increased from one to four;
 - The number of Council issued laptops decreased from twenty-three to nine;
 - The number of Council supplied broadband connections decreased twenty-five to fourteen;
 - Three Members were given an advance of their Technology Fund to help support the purchase of new personal equipment;
 - One Member took a Blackberry handheld to enable them to be in contact whilst on the move.

- 2.7 As the opening balance for each member is set at the beginning of the year then the overall financial model is simplified and as a result the total cost of the scheme for this year is expected to be around £18,500, a saving of over £2,000 with the average cost per member reducing to £331.68.
- 2.8 Members will be consulted in the coming weeks as to their requirements for the forthcoming year and, in line with the agreed process the Independent Remuneration Panel are being consulted on the opening amounts for the technology fund and this is expected to be announced at the Annual Council in May.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the review of the first year of the allowance and to support the continuation of the scheme.
- 3.2 The Committee is asked to support the promotion to new Members, post the election, the use of their own ICT, given the additional flexibility existing Members have gained.

4. Community Benefits

- 4.1 Appropriate use of ICT will enable elected Members to effectively communicate with their electorate and also officers of the council.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The financial implications for the Council are included in section 2 above.

6. Strategic Plan Implications

- 6.1 Appropriate use of ICT will enable elected Members to effectively communicate with their electorate and to support the outcomes of the Strategic Plan.

7. Risk Management Issues

- 7.1 The following specific risks have been identified as relevant to this report.

Risk Description	Likelihood / Impact	Status	Countermeasures
Members continue to feel that the ICT is not appropriate for use.	Low / Significant	Material	The report seeks to present Members with proposals to address financial concerns The situation will continue to be analysed and further action identified if necessary
Making sure that the savings identified can be delivered	Low / Medium	Tolerable	Savings will be carefully tracked
Managing any additional work load arising from the changes	Medium / Low	Tolerable	The changes proposed will potentially introduce increased administration but it is felt that these can be accommodated within existing resources.

Background Documents:

Report to Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27th October 2009

Report to Cabinet on Members' ICT 1st December 2009