

Agenda Item: 10

Meeting: Executive

Date: 12 May 2009

Subject: Elected Members' ICT Provision

Report of: Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources

Summary: The report proposes the arrangements for the provision of elected members ICT within Central Bedfordshire Council post the June 2009 elections.

Advising Officer: Clive Heaphy, Director of Resources

Contact Officer: Caroline Carruthers, Assistant Director (Property & ICT)

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Executive

Key Decision No

Reason for urgency/
Exemption from call-in
(if appropriate) Not Applicable

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That the Executive approve the proposed members ICT provision as specified in paragraphs 8 to 23 (inclusive) of the attached report.**

Reason for Recommendations: To specify the ICT provision that will be made available to elected members after the June 2009 elections in order to allow officers to migrate all elected members from the arrangements of the predecessor authorities to new arrangements for Central Bedfordshire Council.

Introduction & Background Information

1. Elected members currently possess a wide range of ICT provision due to the varying policies of the predecessor authorities.
2. Such differences inhibit the ability of officers to provide effective ICT provision and support to members and create inequalities in the costs borne by individual members.
3. With the changes in the constitution of the Council at the June 2009 elections, now is the appropriate time to introduce more practical and clearly defined policies for Members ICT provision.
4. This report deals only with the specifics of actual ICT provision. The policies applicable to members' use of the equipment and services provided will be subject of a further report at the June Executive.
5. It is recognised that in order for Councillors to carry out their duties in an efficient and effective manner, they must have access to appropriate ICT provision.
6. To be practical, it is recognised by officers that there must be some flexibility in such provision to take account, for example, of those members who already have suitable equipment. It is also recognised however that appropriate standards of information governance and security must be maintained.
7. The proposals contained within this report have been developed in conjunction with a wide selection of current elected members.

Proposals (e-Mail)

8. It is proposed that a new e-Mail domain would be created specifically for councillors (@cbc.gov.uk is suggested subject to registration authority approval and availability). All councillors would receive an @cbc.gov.uk address which would automatically be forwarded to either the private address of their choice or a standard underlying @centralbedfordshire.gov.uk council provided address.
9. It is noted that unless a member wishes to be issued with a council PDA, the choice of whether to use a council or private address does not depend on the choice of whether to take council provided equipment. (Council supplied PDA provision requires a councillor to take a council supplied e-Mail account).

Proposals (Fixed line broadband connectivity)

10. It is proposed that members may choose to either use their own broadband provision or take advantage of a council managed & funded service.
11. For those members who are available to be contacted via E-Mail, but who choose to provide their own broadband provision a flat rate allowance of £500 per annum will be made available, reflecting the costs of equivalent council provision.

12. For those members who take advantage of Council provided broadband, this will only be available where it is provisioned upon a separate (council funded) telephone line, separate from any existing personal fixed line telephony provision.

Proposals (equipment provision except Mobile Phone/PDA)

13. It is proposed that members may choose to either use their own ICT equipment or take advantage of council provided hardware.
14. For those members who provide their own ICT equipment, a one-off payment of £800 claimable once every 4 years will be made available, reflecting the costs of equivalent council provision.
15. Members who already have their own existing ICT equipment will be provided with an allowance of £240 per annum in respect of the cost of licenses, software upgrades, maintenance etc, since, in this instance, it is expected that members will be responsible for the maintenance of their own equipment. This allowance will also include all printing consumables except paper, which will be made available to all members on a free issue basis (subject to it not being an unreasonable quantity) from Member Services.
16. (a) Either
A council supplied desktop computer (complete with screen, keyboard and mouse)
or
A council supplied notebook computer (complete with docking station, screen, keyboard, mouse and 3G Data card)

(Both these options will feature encrypted local disks and locally installed E-Mail and office productivity software. Both options will also be restricted to prevent the installation of unapproved personal software).

(b) Colour Laser Printer (complete with consumables - subject to it not being an unreasonable quantity)

(c) Desktop A4 Scanner

Proposals (Mobile Phone/PDA provision)

17. For those members taking full Council provided E-Mail facilities, a Windows based PDA (with integral mobile phone) will also be provided if requested.
18. For those members who are available to be contacted via mobile phone, but who choose to provide their own mobile phone and/or PDA a flat rate allowance of £200 per annum will be made available, reflecting the costs of equivalent council provision.

Proposals (0300 numbers)

19. All elected members will be provided with a council 0300 number to facilitate officer and citizen contact. This number will be linked to the landline number of the member's choice (usually the number of the council supplied line for those members taking council provided broadband). The 0300 number provided will be used for all official council publications (e.g. website) involving councillors contact details, except where members choose not to use a 0300 number as below.
20. Any elected member who wishes not to use the 0300 number provided (for example to publish a mobile number instead) will be free to do so, however officers strongly recommend that members take advantage of the 0300 number wherever possible.
21. 0300 numbers are a new range of numbers that are not tied to a particular geographic exchange, but which by law must be treated the same as 01xxx & 02x numbers by all UK telephone operators. They therefore cost the citizen no more than a 01xxx or 02x number but give flexibility with regards to business continuity and changes in the personal circumstances of elected members.

Proposals (Access to internal Central Bedfordshire Council systems)

22. All members will be provided to appropriate access to internal Central Bedfordshire Council systems (e.g. Council Intranet) using remote access technologies. However for those members choosing to use their own equipment, there will be restrictions in the ability of those individuals to download or upload files between the council systems and their personal equipment for security reasons (printing will be unaffected).

Proposals (Support)

23. All members will be provided telephone support during office hours with regard to the remote access of Council provided systems as described in paragraph 21 above. Unfortunately equipment and onsite support can only be provided to members who have taken the option of council supplied equipment.

Conclusion and Next Steps

24. The proposals listed in the preceding paragraphs provide a fully featured Council provision of ICT for members whilst offering a suitable flat rate allowance for those members who wish to continue with their own provision.
25. If approved these proposals will be implemented as soon as possible after the elections in June 2009.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS
Council Priorities: Efficient and effective ICT provision for elected members is essential to the smooth running of the Council and facilitates the work of Councillors in meeting Central Bedfordshire Councils objectives.

Financial:

The costs of these proposals (estimated to be £110k) will be met from existing resources.

Legal:

None

Risk Management:

None

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

None

Community Development/Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

Appendices:

None

Background Papers (open to public inspection):

None