

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services

to

Cabinet

on

22nd September 2015

Agenda
Item No.

8

Report prepared by: Sally Holland, Corporate Director

Digital Strategy – Moving towards Paperless meetings

Executive Councillor : Councillor R Woodley

A Part 1 Agenda Item

1. Purpose of Report

To update Members on implementation of the Digital Strategy insofar as it relates to Members ICT and the move towards paperless meetings.

2. Recommendations

That Members note:

- progress made to date;
- the incremental implementation of the project; and
- the actions being put in place to support Members and Officers to work towards paperless meetings.

3. Background

- 3.1 The necessary systems and ICT equipment needs to be provided to ensure that the Council can operate effectively and efficiently. In particular Members need to be provided with appropriate ICT equipment so that they can carry out their duties effectively. The digital world is advancing very rapidly and the Council needs to keep up and embrace change where it offers cost effective solutions. Advances in ICT also offer the potential for financial savings for example by replacing paper-based systems with automated, flexible solutions.

- 3.2 The Council's Digital Strategy endorsed the principles as set out in 3.1 above. This Digital Strategy was recommended by the People Management, Accommodation and Digital Strategy Working Group and formally agreed at Cabinet on 23rd June 2015 (Minute 54 refers) **Appendix 1**. As part of the Digital Strategy it was agreed to procure a new Committee Management System, provide Members with new ICT equipment and move towards paperless meetings.
- 3.3 When the Cabinet's decision was scrutinised at Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2015 (see minute 156 at **Appendix 2**) the Corporate Director for Corporate Services responded to a number of questions from Members, explaining:
- The first stage in the process is procuring a new Committee Management System called Modern.gov which is used widely across the country. A useful feature of Modern.gov is that it will allow Members to download agendas, reports and minutes to their tablet via an App. Although the App is primarily aimed at Members, it will be available to anyone with an interest in having committee papers on their device.
 - All Members will be supplied with a new tablet and a new mobile phone.
 - The advantages of paperless meetings are that it will result in a modern, efficient way of working, achieve savings in printing and courier costs and there will be environmental benefits through reduced paper usage.
 - As well as Members, Officers will need to embrace the challenges presented by paperless meetings, although the experience from other Councils is that the process is straight forward.
 - There is potential for savings to be made. The 2015 / 16 Budget included a saving of £10k in Democratic Services CS19 for 'printing of agendas (on-line / part on-line)'. In addition providing Members with new mobile phones instead of fixed lines will result in further savings.
 - There will be an incremental roll out starting with Cabinet and Group Leaders.
 - Training and support for Members will be key and 1:1 training plans will be put in place.
 - Members can continue to use their current printers if they so wish, however, it is anticipated that the need for printing will be much reduced with the implementation of the new system.
 - General support was obtained from Group Leaders at a meeting on 5th February 2015.

3.4 It was agreed at Council on 23rd July 2015 that Members Basic Allowance does not include the cost of printer cartridges and paper, which the Council will continue to supply.

4. Progress Update

4.1 The new Committee Management System has been procured and it is due to go live 22nd October 2015.

4.2 To date 16 Members have been issued with new ICT equipment (mobile phones and tablets) with the aim to complete to all Members by end March 2016. This will enable Members to work in a mobile environment, allowing access to email and documents whilst at home, within the Civic Centre and on the move.

4.3 Members are able to publish 3 telephone numbers to the Public:

- the Council allocated mobile number.
- the Council allocated landline number, which will continue to exist even though the landline itself will be removed. If rung the caller will only be paying a landline rate.
- personal landline number (cost of calls from here are not recoverable from the Council).

4.4 On deploying the new ICT equipment, training is delivered both at the Civic Centre and at the Members homes. An individual training needs assessment is carried out and an individual plan developed to enable the Member to use the new equipment.

4.5 Regular ICT drop-in sessions are also available in the Members Area at the Civic Centre, the next one being the 24th September 2015 and every 6 weeks thereafter.

4.6 Once the new Committee Management System is fully functional then the second phase of the project to deliver the Cabinet Agenda and Reports on-line to Cabinet members will commence. A full trial period will be undertaken ensuring all equipment is working as it should and that Members are fully trained and supported before progressing the project to the next stage. Accordingly there are no plans to cease the general production and distribution of hard copy agendas and reports in the short term.

5. Other Options

The recommendations in the report are merely to note progress.

6. Reasons for Recommendations

This report has been prepared to ensure that all Members are fully informed of the progress of the project and are aware of the support that is being put in place to support both Members and Officers to achieve implementation.

7. Corporate Implications

7.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities

Supports the ambition of being an excellent Council.

7.2 Financial Implications

The new solution is designed to deliver some reduced costs. £10k is included in the 2015 / 16 budget and a further saving of a similar amount is envisaged in the future. In addition there will be a saving of up to £700 per annum for each Member supplied with a new mobile phone as a replacement for a fixed line and Avaya handset.

7.3 Legal Implications

The Local Government (Electronic Communications) Order 2015 makes it lawful to send out agendas electronically.

7.4 People Implications

There will be an increased demand on ICT in the short term as training is delivered. However, it is anticipated that longer term Members will become more self-sufficient.

7.5 Property Implications

Going forward there will be no need to provide a fixed line connection to Members homes.

7.6 Consultation

Digital Strategy consultation and Member scrutiny and Group Leader meeting.

7.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications

An individual training needs analysis will be undertaken to ensure that the solution delivered meets Members' needs.

7.8 Risk Assessment

Failure to deliver a robust Committee Management System and adequate Member training will result in non-delivery of budget saving.

7.9 Value for Money

The recommended solution is cheaper than the current system and offers flexibility to Members throughout Southend-on-Sea.

7.10 Community Safety Implications

N/A

7.11 Environmental Impact

Reduces the paper consumption of the Council.

8. Background Papers

None

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Minute 54 of Cabinet 23rd June 2015

Appendix 2 – Minute 156 Policy & Resources Scrutiny 16th July 2015

54 Minutes of the Meeting of People Management, Accommodation & Digital Strategy Working Party held on Wednesday, 27th May, 2015

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the People Management, Accommodation & Digital Strategy Working Party concerning the adoption of the Digital Strategy 2014-17 and the People Management Strategy 2015-18.

Resolved:-

↑ See Minute 4 below.

1. That the Digital Strategy 2014-17, including the actions, be approved.
2. That the People Management Strategy 2015-18 and the related Action Plan for 2015/16, be approved.

Reasons for Decision

To adopt Council policies.

Other Options

None.

Note:- This is an Executive Function
Eligible for call-in to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor:- Gilbert

Minute 4 of the Meeting of People Management, Accommodation & Digital Strategy Working Party held Wednesday, 27th May, 2015

4 Digital Strategy

The Working Party considered the most recent version of the Council's Digital Strategy for 2014-17. The first draft of the strategy was considered by the Working Party at its meeting on 29th September 2014.

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Members asked a number of questions which were responded to by officers. Members also made the following comments:-

- This was a comprehensive strategy and officers need to ensure it links up across the whole Council and where possible with the Council's partners (e.g. health, etc);
- cross-referencing the strategy to other policies and Council strategies;
- Ensure that residents continue to receive services by traditional methods (e.g. face-to-face, telephony, etc);
- The need to be explicit on the implications and risks of the strategy.

Resolved:

That Cabinet be recommended to adopt the Digital Strategy 2014-17 and the actions contained therein.



156 Digital Strategy - Minute 4 of the Meeting of People Management, Accommodation & Digital Strategy Working Party held on Wednesday, 27th May, 2015

The Committee considered Minute 54 of Cabinet held on 23rd June 2015, which had been called in to scrutiny, which was the Minutes of the People Management, Accommodation & Digital Strategy Working Party held on 27th May 2015 and the recommendation in so far as it relates to the Southend Digital Strategy (Minute 4).

In response to a number of questions from the Committee, the Executive Councillor for Community and Organisational Development and the Corporate Director for Corporate Services explained how the shift to paperless meetings and the new ICT systems and equipment would be implemented in an incremental way, with full support and training being provided to Members.

Resolved:-

That the following decision of Cabinet be noted:-

"That the Digital Strategy 2014-17, including the actions, be approved."

Note:- This is an Executive Function.
Executive Councillor:- Gilbert