

# PAPERLESS SYSTEM OF COMMUNICATION FOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES PROVISION

## DISCUSSION PAPER

### WHERE ARE WE?

The Council at its meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015 (Minute 7.2 refers) considered and supported the following notice of motion submitted by Councillor E.Dole:-

*“In light of the financial crisis facing local Government and the proposed budget efficiencies required – this Council believes that there is a need to identify savings wherever they can be achieved. This Council therefore proposes that all Councillors should accept their responsibility in contributing towards efficiency savings and therefore move as soon as possible to a paperless system of communication with all Councillors”.*

As a result of this decision, the Council purchased iPads for all elected members/senior officers together with Modern.gov software a committee management system which is used to create and publish agendas, reports and minutes of the Council’s Committees. The system also allows users to download via an app committees of interest and will then automatically keep itself updated with all the latest meeting papers including the full agenda pack. The Apps allow users to highlight sections of the pack and make annotations just as you would with a paper copy. The first agenda using Modern.gov was published in September 2015.

It is acknowledged that there have been some teething problems in terms of the use of electronic equipment and a decision to move to paperless working has been delayed in order for those issues to be resolved. Officers are also mindful of the need to upgrade the meeting rooms so that adequate charging facilities are available.

To date 4 Members have chosen not to have paper copies.

**SPEND TO DATE ON PAPERLESS WORKING** (following Council decision on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2015 and based on roll out in July 2015 to Councillors & Chief Officers):-

KIT	INITIAL COSTS	ONGOING COSTS
Hardware (change of kit required to provide access to the mod.gov app.) and data sim	£37,596.35	Data sim £9 per kit. (£9x 74 £666 per month) IT equipment will be updated as necessary in accordance with IRWP determinations for member support.
Software – Mod.gov	£28,510	£11,010.00

## APPROXIMATE ADDITIONAL SPEND REQUIRED:-

<b>Supply and installation of 44no twin 13A socket outlets, each complete with 2no USB ports, one twin socket to be located between a pair of members seating locations.</b>	<b>£5278.90 (minimum cost)*</b>
*Chamber County Hall only – additional spend required if Spilman Street and Llanelli Town Hall are to be included	

It is acknowledged that the Authority will need to make changes to some of its meeting rooms in order to move towards digital delivery. It is considered that the Authority will need to install power sockets for use by members during meetings to ensure sufficient power for their devices. Initial costs for this provision comes in at £5278.90. The quotation price does not include an allowance for builders works associated with lifting of existing carpets and floorboards around the chamber, to allow access under the suspended floor to run cables, and replacing same after new circuits have been installed.

The Committee table in the Committee Room, County Hall has been installed with charging points thus the meeting room is fit for digital delivery.

## POTENTIAL AVERAGE ANNUAL SAVING (Based on April 2016-March 2017 figures – does not include staff costs)

<b>Postage Costs</b>	<b>£4,525.34</b>
<b>Printing Costs</b>	<b>£7953.37</b>
The above figure is based on the current re-charge to the Democratic Budget following efficiencies already achieved through the Konika printer rationalisation project.	
There is further potential to deliver savings by reducing the number of print machines in the Print Room at County Hall,	
It is anticipated that further savings in terms of productivity and environmental factors can also be achieved.	

## LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS:-

The Local Government Act 1972 specifies that

“a summons to attend the meeting, specifying the business to be transacted thereat, and signed by the proper officer of the Council, shall, subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, be left at or sent by post to the usual place of residence of every member of the Council”

Both the All Wales Monitoring Officer Group and the Heads of Democratic Network have raised with Frank Cuthbert - Head of Local Government Democracy - Welsh Assembly Government the need for legislation to be updated to keep up with modern technology/ readily accessible information via electronic means. The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 has amended the Local Government Act 1972 to allow a summons to be sent to members by an appropriate method however this does not apply in Wales.

However, sub-paragraph (3) of the Local Government Act (1972) states that:

“If a member of a principal council gives notice in writing to the proper officer of the council that he desires summonses to attend meetings of the council to be sent to him at some address specified in the notice other than his place of residence, any summons addressed to him and left at or sent by post to that address shall be deemed sufficient service of the summons”

This allows Members to specify an alternative address and in some other local authorities across Wales Members have used this clause to specify that their usual place of residence is the Members Room/Lounge. This has allowed for the summons to be hand-delivered and/or displayed at the County Hall rather than being sent by post to their home address.

Under the current law this would be optional and according to the preference of the individual Member.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The Carmarthenshire Democratic Process could move to a paperless system of working immediately, as the team have been operating the software since September 2015.

Options for consideration:-

Option 1	No change
Option 2	Proceed with the installation of charging points in the Council Chamber at a cost of approx.£6k. – 7k. Encourage more members to ‘opt out’ of paper copy agendas in order to deliver an element of saving.
Option 3	Proceed with the installation of charging points (as per option 2).  Recommend via the Democratic Process, that the Authority moves towards paperless communication with councillors (including all committee documentation) and to identify an implementation date .