

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 5 AUGUST 2014

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NEW PROPOSALS FOR SUPPORTING MEMBERS' ICT

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To propose a new policy for supporting Members' use of ICT
- To propose improved ICT support arrangements for Members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE: That:

(A)	the policy detailed in the report now submitted requiring Members to access ICT systems using their own equipment with effect from May 2015, be approved;
(B)	the ownership of existing laptops be transferred to re-elected Members that wish to continue using them from May 2015 onwards;
(C)	Members who are not elected in May 2015 return their laptops to provide a stock of equipment to be transferred to new Members should they wish to use them;
(D)	the new arrangements for supporting Members set out in section 4 of this report be approved;
(E)	the new Members' ICT support arrangements referred to in (D) above be put in place prior to May 2015 for those Members who wish to pilot such arrangements; and
(F)	the new ICT Support Arrangements be formally reviewed post May 2015 to a timeframe to be agreed with the Executive Member for Economic Development.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The current arrangements for supporting Members' use of ICT have been in place for a number of years. They reflect the general trends in the way that ICT was used when the policy was originated as well as the limitations of what it was possible to achieve with the infrastructure technology in place at the time.
- 1.2 Under the current arrangements, which will change should Executive agree to the recommendations in this report, all Members are provided with a laptop with software loaded on to the laptops locally. Members are able to access e-mail via Outlook web access, but are not able to log on to Council systems directly using Citrix. Laptops are encrypted to guard against the risk of data loss.
- 1.3 In recent years technology has moved on. There has been a huge increase in the use of Smart phones and tablets. There has also been a corresponding improvement in the speed of broadband services, the availability of wireless networks and the use of mobile telephony networks for accessing the internet, although services to rural areas, including parts of East Herts, remain more limited. More recently the ICT Shared Service has implemented new infrastructure technology across the Council which allows Members and staff to access the East Herts network easily from a range of different devices, wherever they can obtain an internet connection so that East Herts Members and staff can now fully benefit from this new technology.
- 1.4 The way that the East Herts infrastructure is designed meets the new, more stringent, security requirements that all Councils need to comply with to participate in the Public Services Network (PSN). Unlike many other authorities, whose infrastructure architecture does not comply with best practice, East Herts staff and Members have the opportunity to use personal devices to access systems as well as Council owned, managed devices. Other Councils have been required to spend very significant amounts of money to revert to Council managed devices, even though staff and Members have wished to pursue more flexible policies involving staff and Members using their own equipment.
- 1.5 As is now the case across the country, the majority of East Herts Members now own smart phones. There are East Herts Members who want to access services using tablet devices or from their home PC. There are also a number of Members who want to access ICT services

using a range of different devices. Recognising this trend, the policy and support arrangements that are proposed below seek to put in place arrangements that allow Members to access technology much more flexibly. However, they also recognise that some Members are less confident when using ICT and require proper support. The section on enhancing support arrangements for Members seeks to put this safety net in place.

2.0 Proposed Policy for Members' ICT

2.1 The new infrastructure technology now implemented in East Herts allows Members to access Council systems, including e-mail, from any device, assuming they have access to the internet. Therefore, it is proposed that from May 2015, Members will be required to access Council systems using their own ICT device(s), rather than using a standard device provided by the Council. This provides the following advantages for Members:

- Members can use a device or devices of their choice in line with their individual needs
- Members will not need to use different technology for their personal use to the devices they use when working on Council business
- Members can upgrade their technology at a time of their choosing

2.2 Laptops that are currently being used by Members will be transferred to them at no cost, if Members wish to continue using them. The devices are still perfectly serviceable but have been fully depreciated and have no financial value to the Council. Proprietary software loaded on the laptops, such as Microsoft Word, will be removed as the software license cannot be transferred. However, Members will be able to access word and other software applications by logging on to Council systems. Alternatively, the ICT Team will support Members who wish to download free software, such as Open Office, onto their local devices. It is recommended that Members who do not seek re-election or who stand but are not re-elected be asked to return their Council laptops so that a sufficiently large stock will exist to transfer these devices to any new Members who wish to use them post May 2015.

2.3 The only stipulation that will be imposed upon Members is that each device they use to access Council systems must be authenticated by the network using a security certificate. This is a requirement that is required to comply with Public Services Network security rules, but it is also best practice recommended by the Information Commissioner.

The process of authenticating a device and adding a security certificate is non-invasive and can be achieved following an exchange of e-mails.

3.0 Using Systems Flexibly

3.1 Members will be free to access systems in a variety of ways under these proposals. If Members wish to continue receiving e-mails using Web-Outlook, this service will still be available. Alternatively Members may wish to receive e-mail on their phone or on their tablet, in which case there is an option to push (actively synchronise) e-mail to these devices so they are received without having to log-on to systems. Finally Members can choose to log in to the new Hosted Desk Top on the Council network to access e-mail and other ICT Services for Members that are being developed. For example, the ICT Service is seeking to establish an electronic filing area for Members on the Council's network which will represent a more secure way of storing information and ensuring that it is regularly backed up.

4.0 ICT Support for Members

4.1 Members, as well as officers, are able to contact ICT via the ICT Service Desk, available by telephone from 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday. The Service Desk will also be available on-line once the new IT Service Desk IT system has been implemented later on this year. There should always be someone available to provide support to Members on the Service Desk during supported hours and often they will be able to deal with issues straightaway over the phone. The Team's ability to do this is monitored and performance managed. However, from time to time, there will be issues that cannot be dealt with immediately by the Service Desk. In these circumstances it is proposed that all issues or enquiries from Members be passed on to a new Team with specific responsibility for providing operational support to Members in both Councils. This responsibility will form part of the officers' roles. No new staff will be employed for this team to be established.

4.2 The Members' Support Team will comprise:

- The ICT Services, Security and Standards Manager
- Two of the Technical Support Engineer staff to be appointed as part of the forthcoming restructuring of the ICT Service

4.3 All day to day Member support issues will be overseen on a day to day

basis by the ICT Services, Security and Standards Manager. He is a manager of long standing with experience of working with Members. He currently provides Member induction training at Stevenage Borough Council and has recently provided the same service to the new Councillor at East Herts. He is currently working with the Member Working Party looking at the induction of new Members and coordinating the roll out of the new hosted desktop to members in both Councils. He will act as the initial point of contact with Members as well as the point of escalation if they are unhappy with the service being received.

- 4.4 The ICT Services, Security and Standards Manager will be supported by two experienced Technical Support Engineers. These staff will do most of the day to day work with individual Members to help them get up and running with new technology and to support them if they experience difficult on-going support issues. A group of three staff have been selected to try and achieve the right balance between developing continuity and a strong personal service for Members with the need to ensure there is sufficient capacity available and resilience in the support model.
- 4.5 General advice provided to Members by the ICT Service will include the following subjects:
- Purchasing new technology – staff from the Members' Support Team staff will spend time with individual members to understand how they wish to use technology and to provide them with access to up-to-date information about solutions that will suit them
 - Advice on free software that is available
 - Options and advice on how to access broadband including solutions for Members' who live in rural areas where high speed broadband is not available. This will include advice on how to use mobile telephone networks to get on-line and Smartphone tethering
- 4.6 A key focus for the Members Support Team will be to work with Members to ensure that they are set up properly with their new ICT from the outset. With this in mind, the members Support Team will provide Members with guidance that explains how to access their new hosted desktop from a range of devices. This guidance will include screens shots and step by step help on how to download the client software on to Members own equipment. The Members Support Team will also assist Members with this process if Members request or need this support. In the first instance support will be provided over the

phone but where Members are using mobile devices then these can be brought into any Council office for configuration by appointment. The Team may also be called upon to visit Members at home if they experience problems with their home PC, although it is envisaged that this is a service the team will only be called upon to provide quite rarely. The Members Support Team are there to provide a safety net for Members who wish to try and learn how to set up their own equipment, as well as to provide direct support to those Members who just want to get up and running with their technology as soon as possible.

- 4.7 From time to time IT systems will fail. The Members Support Team will do what they can to try and help Members if they experience problems with their equipment. The support team or Service Desk Team will:
- Try and diagnose issues. In some cases, the Team may be able to resolve the issue themselves. On other occasions, where for example there is hardware failure, or software is malfunctioning, the team may need to advise Members to contact the supplier of the equipment to remedy the fault
 - Shadow Members remotely. IT staff will set up systems to allow, with Members' consent, access to a Member's computer remotely to try and diagnose issues. This should allow staff to support Members with problems with their home PC, provided they are able to gain access to the internet
- 4.8 Staff will be able to remedy the following types of problem directly:
- Configuration changes to devices (for example recommending or applying changes to settings)
 - Upgrading key components on the device (for example recommending or upgrading web browsing software)
- 4.9 Staff will not be able to deal with issues relating to hardware failure on devices as typically these require components to be replaced or by trying to remedy issues the intervention by IT staff might invalidate warranties on the devices. In these cases staff will attempt to recommend the next course of action to Members. This might include returning the device to the manufacturer or signposting Members to local companies that can carry out repairs. Finally staff will not be able to support Members experiencing problems with their IT where the problems do not relate to their work as Councillors.

4.10 It is proposed that all the ICT support services provided to Members be set out in a ICT Service Catalogue for Members. This will include:

- The ICT Services provided to Members
- The list of IT systems that Members are able to access, together with a description of these systems and links to further information about them
- An explanation of how to access the IT service
- An overview of the security that is in place to protect Members and their data

Once a catalogue has been produced there will be clarity for Members regarding the services they can expect to receive. The catalogue also provides a starting point should Members wish to discuss making changes to services.

5.0 Arrangements for Reviewing the Policy and for Supporting Members until May 2015

5.1 As stated earlier in this report Members' have a range of different ICT needs and exhibit a full range of ICT skills. While there may be some Members who are apprehensive about these proposals there will be others eager to benefit straightaway. It is, therefore, intended that the Members Support Team be put in place as soon as possible, following the forthcoming restructuring of the ICT Service, and that they fully support Members who wish to use their own equipment to access ICT systems now. A particular benefit of taking this approach will be to fully test the resilience of the proposed support model before May 2015 when the remainder of the Members come on board with the new arrangements.

5.2 Once the new support arrangements have been put in place formally, it is suggested that they be reviewed with input from Members to iron out any remaining issues causing problems. The timescale for the review should remain flexible at this stage as it may depend upon the level of feedback both positive and negative received from Members once the new system goes live.

5.3 Finally, while this report sets out arrangements that should work well for almost all Members, the policy and support arrangements should not be regarded as set in stone, except where they cover arrangements to provide security or safeguard data. The spirit of this report is that officers wish to support all Members to maximise the benefits they

receive from using IT systems. To this end, a common sense view will be taken in interpreting this policy and in considering support requirements going forward.

6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None

Contact Member: Councillor Paul Phillips, Executive Member for Economic Development
paul.phillips@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Adele Taylor - Director of Finance & Support Services
01992 531401
adele.taylor@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Henry Lewis – Head of Business and Technology Services
henry.lewis@eastherts.gov.uk