

AGENDA ITEM 16

POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

29 SEPTEMBER 2010

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT OF THE EXTRAORDINARY EFFICIENCY TASK GROUP

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief Members on the work of the Extraordinary Efficiency Task Group (the Task Group) and to consider its recommendations.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that :-

- 2.1 **officers be instructed to lobby strongly to promote a change in legislation relating to the dispatch of agenda and reports to Members on decision making bodies;**
- 2.2 **working Groups and Task Groups be managed by wholly electronic means;**
- 2.3 **leaders of the 3 larger Political Groups be asked to nominate one Member per group to trial the iPad and mirror the trial with a similar number for current laptops;**
- 2.4 **reports from Member's tests be made to this Committee at a future meeting.**

3.0 KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Task Group has continued to examine how it can successfully develop the Members commitment to work more electronically. The Task Group accepts that in order to make progress the Council should build on its successes. The Task Group itself has operated fully electronically for several months. Members do not find this undermines their ability to make recommendations and the use of the overhead projector to work through the agenda brings Members together in their debate.
- 3.2 The Task Group accepts that the legal position on these matters is by no means clear. It has come to the Task Groups attention that some authorities are accepting the request by Members to work electronically in sending all papers to them (including those for decision making meetings). Members will recall that as a result of concerns by some colleagues the Council fully researched this matter and took external legal advice and is aware that the current legal position is that for decision making committees the agenda and its reports must be "posted" to Members. The issue of whether posting a memory stick or disc to Members would meet this requirement has not been tested.
- 3.3 Whilst the Task Group notes the impact of this out of date legislation it requests that the Council lobby on this point strongly both the Local Government Group and Cabinet Office.
- 3.4 However to move forward it is proposed to help Members develop their skills, move forward with the use of electronic working and to give an opportunity to refine the processes, that all Working Groups and Task Groups should work electronically, receiving papers by email/link printing only if the Member feels that it is appropriate, and using the "projected" agenda to assist with moving through the debate and discussion. The process will be that the papers are still sent to Members as usual with the link, Members can still work through them in the usual way that suits the individual, and at the meeting Members will be requested to bring their laptop or if they do not have one the officers will set up a laptop for their use. As in the case of the Task Group memory sticks (or in future discs) will

be inserted in the machines ready for the Member decision making and the projector is operated by an officer or indeed as in the case of the Task Group frequently one of the Members.

- 3.5 Also, to move forward the embedding of the electronic working the Task Group has received a presentation by the national e-Councillor champion, Councillor Ross Grant of Leicester City on his use of his iPad for Councillor duties. The iPad is much lighter, more flexible and by the use of “applications” (“apps”) can be individually moulded to the Councils needs.
- 3.6 Members of the Task Group considered that the iPad should be tested by this Council in a similar way to Leicester City. As the Councils laptops will be refreshed during 2011 this is an ideal time to consider the alternatives. It is suggested therefore that the Group Leaders of each Party be asked to nominate a Member from their group (including themselves, as appropriate), to test the iPad. The Member taking on the responsibility would be required to prepare 2 reports in similar format during testing period. These reports would be supplied to the Task Group in order to consider the use of the iPad itself. It is suggested that the test be carried out for 4 months with the reports being at 2 months and 4 months at the close of the testing period.
- 3.7 To compare this it is also suggested that the Group Leaders nominate 3 Members who will continue to use their laptops and they also be asked to put forward reports at 2 and 4 months giving a critique of the development of the use of the laptop alternative. With respect to the latter matter it should be noted that should the Council refresh its laptops it may go to another supplier however, Members will be aware that the principles of use of laptops are very similar throughout the industry.
- 3.8 Finally, the Members of the Task Group tested out the “why/why” approach to critically examining services. The area of “conservation” was examined and an interesting discussion took place upon why the Council carried out the service, its links to other Council activities and in particular any links through to Council priorities. The outcome of that discussion was that “whilst conservation was not a priority it is important, but should involve partners. The service could reduce to bronze as the Council is not the lead partner”.

4.0 **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council is endeavouring to help Members towards increased electronic working. It is suggested that moving the Working Groups/Task Groups to this way of working will assist with developing skills and opportunities for Members to refine the process to one which they are comfortable with. Also, by testing the iPad the Council is making sure that in its refresh of its technology all options are being considered. Concerns exist as to the integration of the iPad with the Councils technical networks, however, this is the purpose of the test to ascertain the extent of these difficulties and the need for technical support.

5.0 **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The test for use of the iPads will cost approximately £2,000. The Council lost 106 desktops/laptops as a result of the fire and our insurers will be fully funding their replacement and reinstatement. Due to the age of the remaining stock the 2010/11 and 2011/12 PC replacement budgets will also be fully utilised to replace all the remaining stock totalling some £72,000. If Members wish to utilise part for this trial it will be funded through this route.

The Council has been diligent in capturing savings arising from its improved electronic working. The reduction in use of paper, printing and posting arising from the electronic

working proposed by the Task Groups and Working Groups will be monitored and savings recouped.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 The Task Group is requesting the parent Committee to lobby forcefully and diligently for a change in legislation to enable the use of electronic means for receipt of papers by decision making bodies.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 Members will receive training and support as required in the use of the iPads and learning will be put in place to ascertain what are the further requirements needed to develop electronic business.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 Probability

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|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Very High A | | | | |
| High B | | | | |
| Significant C | | | | |
| Low D | | 2 | 1 | |
| Very Low E | | | | |
| Almost Impossible F | | | | |
| | IV Neg- ligible | III Marg- inal | II Critical | I Catast- rophic |

→ Impact

| Risk No. | Description |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Sufficient information to make an informed decision on use of technology. |
| 2 | Compliance with legislation. |
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10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 The use of electronic means of business assists us in reducing the use of paper, printing and postage in getting the necessary papers to Members.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 A survey of electronic working was carried out with Members. Its results were reported to the Task Group. A disappointing response to the survey was received but on the whole there appeared to be a willingness to move forward with electronic working.

12.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

12.1 All

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Date: 20 September 2010

Appendices : None

Background Papers: None

Reference : X:\PFA\2010-11\290910\LA - Report of the Extraordinary Task Group.doc