POLICY, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2016

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

COMMITTEE SOFTWARE BUSINESS CASE
AND ICT PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS

1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To request approval of a Committee Software Business Case and to progress the project including the associated costs.

1.2 To request approval of the revised ICT Protocol for Members and refer the same to Full Council for adoption in the Council's Constitution

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 **To approve the Committee Software Business Case and to approve the purchase of the Committee Software, Modern.gov, based on the associated costs set out at paragraph 5.1.**

2.2 **To approve the revised ICT Protocol for Members and refer the same to Full Council for adoption in the Council's Constitution. To also grant delegated authority to the Head of Communications to amend the protocol in line with best practice and changes to legislation.**

3.0 **KEY ISSUES**

Committee Software Business Case

3.1 A Project Mandate was approved by this Committee on 1 December 2015 and was subsequently included within the Capital Programme that went to the Budget Meeting of Full Council on 10 February 2016. The mandate referred to the principle of introducing Committee software and set out the costs of three companies. Modern.gov has been pursued as the most appropriate choice of software for Melton as it is the market leader, has over 250 customers including most of the Leicestershire authorities, has a proven track record and a robust support network. Therefore a detailed Business Case for this software is attached at Appendix A for the Committee's consideration.

3.2 To move the Council forward in the way it delivers its decision-making and Committee documentation which meets the needs of its customers and is modern and easy to find what you are looking for, dedicated Committee software called Modern.gov is proposed. Currently Committee papers are manually managed and are available on the IDOX portal which publishes to the website. These democracy pages are difficult to navigate and meeting information is deeply stored. There are no interactive links between documents and there is no dedicated search facility. The Modern.gov Committee Management Software will streamline back office processes, reduce duplication, double and treble-keying and

potentially make savings in staff time as well as provide a customer friendly, interactive, seamlessly accessible area of the website.

3.3 The proposed software can also help the Council move forward in its aspirations for paperless meetings using the software's secure tablet app. This modern approach to meeting management will make cost savings in staff time, stationery and postage. It is considered that paperless meetings would comprise phase 2 of the project to firstly allow for the software to be installed and embedded as well as prepare and foster Member commitment to working electronically in meetings. It may be helpful to note that a strong wifi signal would be helpful at paperless meetings, although so long as the agenda pack is downloaded before the meeting, a weaker signal should not affect Member participation at the meeting.

3.4 There are Committee administration staff in all of the four service areas who deal with the Committee process by following a set of written procedures and manual processes involving cutting and pasting similar information from agenda to reports to decision schedules to minutes. The Modern.gov software automatically creates an agenda by the user entering each item of business once and the subsequent documents as previously mentioned are then automatically produced by selecting the relevant option. Also for uploading the agenda pack to the website, this is by the click of a button and all the documents needed for a meeting including the agenda, minutes, reports electronically pull together to form one pdf document. This process alone will save time in not having to convert each individual document to a pdf for the website as is currently the case. However the savings in time for the Committee administration staff are not significant enough to save a post as these individuals carry out many other service-related duties and Committee preparation is not a daily task but revolves around the five cycles set by the annual Calendar of Meetings.

3.5 A delegation of Officers has visited Blaby District Council to find out how Committee papers are delivered to Members and experienced a paperless Committee using ipads. Blaby uses the Modern.gov software as well as the secure app. Valuable insight was gained into how paperless Committees could work at Melton and the potential for savings in this way of working on hard copy agenda production are included at paragraph 5.2. The savings shown are based on the Calendar of Meetings only and do not include the potential for savings on the removal of papers for other meetings such as Ad hoc Committees, Extraordinary Council meetings, Sub Committees, Working Groups and Task Group.

ICT Protocol for Members

3.6 The Council is committed to the development of e-democracy and is working to increase the range of information which is available to Councillors electronically and to enable Councillors to conduct more of their business digitally. The Council is also looking for efficiencies and these are most achieveable in this way of working. Due to this shift in priorities and changes in data protection legislation and the potential for paperless meetings should the Committee Software Business Case be approved, the ICT Protocol for Members has been revised and is attached at Appendix B.

3.7 In this constantly moving electronic environment, it is important that the security of the Council's information is protected and that the expectations set out by Government and the Council are followed, therefore the protocol includes

important requirements for Members when dealing with people's personal information and emails. As the current arrangements are not considered to be in accordance with government guidelines, the Council is to trial a new method of secure emails for Members being the government approved cloud based software, Office 365. The use of this software will reflect best practice with regard to ICT security and data protection compliance and also take advantage of technological advancements that are available. Using this new method, access to key services such as electronic mail and Committee papers can be from a wide range of devices such as mobile phones, ipads and laptops. Members will still be provided with a '@melton.gov.uk' email address and this will be hosted by the new cloud-based software rather than the individual Councillor's own email supplier which is the current arrangement. Subject to Committee approval following a successful trial, it is proposed that this service will be available from Autumn 2016.

3.8   Also to comply with our data protection obligations, each Member is to be registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (IC) annually. It was originally considered that Members needed to sign up individually online themselves, however it has been advised that the Council can facilitate a multiple registration for all Members and following registration a certificate will be supplied by the ICO for each Member.

3.9   There is legislation which allows the electronic delivery of agendas to Members so long as the Member agrees, this is called an e-summons. To facilitate paperless Committees, the Council would need to ensure that Members agree to the e-summons and in preparation for this way of working, the Protocol includes provision for Members to sign up to the e-summons.   For this reason and the data protection issues mentioned above, it is intended that all Councillors will be asked to sign up to the new ICT Protocol whether or not they are in possession of Council-owned equipment.

3.10   It may be helpful to note that there is an offer for all Members to take advantage of the loan of a Council ipad or laptop however to not take up the offer would imply that the Member has made their own ICT arrangements and will have access to an ipad or laptop should paperless Committees be introduced.

3.11   This revised ICT Protocol for Members supersedes all previous ICT arrangements for Members.

4.0   **POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1   The project links to the Corporate Priority of being an 'Agile Council' to effectively manage demand delivering well-respected and value for money customer focused services with pride and efficiency.

4.2   The aims of the new Committee software are to meet customers' expectations in accessing decision-making and democracy information and to create efficiencies. To achieve these aims a commitment to learning and cultural change for Councillors, staff and customers will be needed.

5.0   **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1   The financial implications of introducing Modern.gov are set out at paragraph B8 of Appendix A and in summary amount to £15,000 capital outlay in year 1 with a revenue cost of £2,500. From year 2 the revenue cost will be £9,500 and £11,500

from year 4. The capital allocation was already made as part of the budget setting for 2016/17.

5.2 The revenue costs above can be offset against an approximate saving of £7,300 per year based on the meetings listed in the annual Calendar of Meetings should paperless Committees be accepted. This saving has been calculated using estimates of staff time, photocopying and supplies for each Committee. This figure does not include hard copy agendas and papers for Ad hoc Committees, Extraordinary Council meetings, Sub Committees, Working Groups and Task Groups therefore there is potential for further savings if these meetings are also paperfree.

5.3 In addition to the potential savings highlighted in the Business Case which mainly relate to hard copy agenda production, there will be efficiencies in Committee administrator time and this will be spread over each of the service areas but is not able to be accumulated across the Council to equate to a post as each Committee administrator carries out many other service-related tasks besides the cycles of Committee work. However this reduction can be captured as part of other changes taking place in services as other efficiency projects are implemented.

5.4 There will be a need to train the staff involved in working with the new software.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 The new software will need to meet accessibility standards and this will be achieved by working closely with the company on the installation and template arrangements.

6.2 Comprehensive security is included within the software and allows for all common types of information to be published fully secured, safeguarding sensitive documents and to meet exemption criteria of Access to information legislation.

6.3 There is recent legislation that allows delivery of an electronic summons to Members for a Committee meeting subject to the consent of the Member.

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

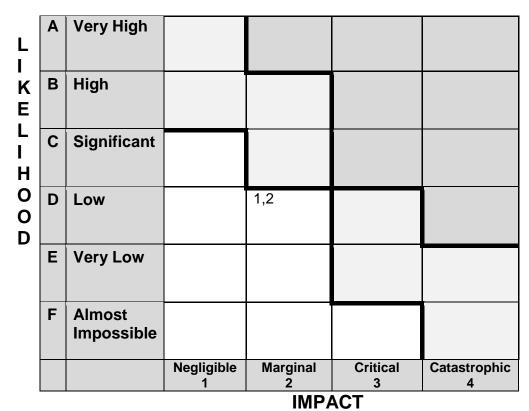7.1 There are no specific community safety implications in this report.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed the main points being that a digitally led committee package with more integrated features is generally seen as improving equality and social inclusion as it provides the opportunity for anyone to search and locate what they are looking for more easily and in less time than the current offering.

8.2 The search facility improves the openness and transparency of decision-making meetings and enables more local residents to access the decisions that affect their lives.

8.3 The enhanced service will help those in remote areas, those who work shifts or are housebound to find out about democracy easily including decisions, their Ward

Councillor, meeting arrangements etc in their own homes at a time to suit their personal commitments.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The Modern.gov software is proven as reliable, fit for purpose as well as being the market leader therefore the risks associated with the report mainly relate to the identified savings not being achievable should all Members not take up the opportunity of paperless Committees and non-compliance with the new ICT Protocol for Members.

			Negligible 1	Marginal 2	Critical 3	Catastrophic 4
L I K E L I H O O D	A	Very High				
	B	High				
	C	Significant				
	D	Low		1,2		
	E	Very Low				
	F	Almost Impossible				

IMPACT

Risk No	Risk Description
1	Lack of commitment to paperless committees will result in savings identified not being achieved
2	Non-compliance with the ICT Protocol could result in loss, damage or misuse of Council ICT equipment.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 The proposals encourage paperless Committees and electronic access by the public to decision-making information which both help to meet the Council's green targets.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 There has been consultation with the Programme Board and the ICT Services Manager.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1   All indirectly.

Contact Officer:	Sarah Evans, Senior Democracy Officer
Date:	June 2016
Appendices:	Appendix A – Business Case – Modern.gov
	Appendix B - ICT Protocol for Members
Background Papers:	
Reference:	PFA/2016-17/120716/Committee Software & ICT Protocol for Members