

**ANGUS COUNCIL – 23 MARCH 2017**

**ELECTED MEMBERS – USE OF TECHNOLOGY - PILOT FINDINGS AND PROPOSALS**

**REPORT BY RICHARD STIFF, CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report details the findings of the pilot carried out by 6 elected members into working paperless during 2016-17 and proposes a move to paperless operations following the 2017 local government elections.

**1. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Council:

- agree to move to paperless meetings with effect from May 2017;
- authorise the Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Democratic Services to make the necessary arrangements for the new elected members in preparation for May 2017; and

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013 - 2016:

- Our communities are developed in a sustainable manor
- Our natural and built environment is protected and enjoyed
- Our carbon footprint is reduced.

**3. BACKGROUND**

In February 2016, six elected members took part in a trial which involved participating in all council business electronically receiving access to all committee papers via the council's document centre. Elected members were furnished with a Microsoft Surface Pro which enabled members to work in a digital environment with no paper for committee meetings on almost all occasions.

**4. FINDINGS**

The Surface Pro, a lightweight tablet/laptop was configured by the council's IT team to be compliant with UK-wide PSN (Public Sector Network) security requirements and to provide members with the tools required to embrace the challenges that a digital council faces. Drawboard, a software application, allowed members to follow meetings, take notes on the papers, highlight areas of interest and do all the necessary preparation that elected members would ordinarily do with paper copies of committee reports.

Monthly meetings were held with the members in the trial group to iron out any difficulties, identify specific training needs and to continually develop members to carry out their role efficiently and effectively.

The elected members, all with varying IT skill levels, embraced the pilot and are now confident and competent in this way of working. Ultimately, the pilot has proved that a digital approach to Council business for Councillors is feasible and effective without loss of access to essential information.

## **5. PROPOSALS**

Currently elected members receive a courier delivery twice a week with their committee papers. Around £7,000 per annum is spent on providing papers to elected members and the associated courier delivery service to members.

In order to modernise the Committee process and reduce the Council's carbon footprint, it is proposed that in May 2017, all 28 elected members will be provided with a Surface Pro to carry out their role in a digital manner enabling them to work in a paper free environment from the start of their term of office. The Surface Pros used in the pilot will be redeployed to Committee Services to ensure that they are working the same tools as members at meetings and can assist if issues arise.

There is currently an ad hoc courier delivery service in place for the delivery of committee papers to elected members. It is proposed that this service will not be renewed when the contract expires on 1 June 2017 and all committee papers will be accessed digitally from that date.

This proposal supports the council's digital strategy and moves forward our aspiration to be a digital business.

## **6. THE FIRST FEW WEEKS**

In order to ensure that all elected members, both returning members and those newly elected, are comfortable with the move to paperless, during the first few weeks in office training will commence with a handover and an introductory session scheduled for Friday 12<sup>th</sup> May. Thereafter, regular lunchtime sessions will be held to assist members with the functionality required to access committee papers, mark them up and so on. Members will appreciate that the Statutory Meeting of Angus Council is scheduled for Tuesday 16 May before training has been offered -and therefore members will not be expected to be working digitally until the commencement of the first full Committee Cycle i.e. from 30 May 2017.

Chairs of Committees will be given advice about the pace and leadership of meetings in the initial stages so everyone can be fully engaged.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The cost associated with the purchase of 28 Surface Pro machines, built for PSN compliance is approximately £28,000. The Drawboard licence for a five year period is £10,000. The Town & County Hall requires additional plug sockets and an additional Wi-Fi boost installed. The estimated cost for these one-off works is £6000.

Recurring costs from the proposals will be approximately £2,000 p.a. compared to the current £7,000 p.a. generating a small saving in the revenue budget. Over the upcoming 5 year term of office the total cost is an estimated £44,000 including the purchase and one-off works costs. This 5 year cost would likely exceed the cost of current arrangements over the same period but members will wish to bear in mind the non-financial benefits associated with this proposal in terms of new ways of working and reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

Funding for the purchase and works costs has been identified as part of the 2016/17 100% carry forwards approved in Report 48/17.

## **8. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

A move to paperless processes demonstrates our commitment to a reduction in our carbon footprint. There will be less paper produced and significantly less transportation emissions. Bespoke training will be available for elected members to ensure they can carry out their democratic duties to their full ability.

## **9. CONSULTATION**

The Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance, Head of Human Resources, IT and Organisational Development and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

**REPORT AUTHOR: ELAINE WHITTET, CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UNIT**  
**EMAIL DETAILS: [whittete@angus.gov.uk](mailto:whittete@angus.gov.uk)**

