



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

28TH MARCH 2018

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CABINET & PUBLIC RELATIONS.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise and seek Members approval in respect of the recommendations of the Democratic Services Committee which met on the 12TH February, 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council:

- 2.1 Note the Feedback from the Democratic Services Committee following consideration of the Document Management Proposals report on the 12th February, 2018.
- 2.2 Agree to support further extension of the paperless approach to all committees of the Council as detailed within this report and the report considered at Democratic Services on the 12th February, 2018, taking forward a phased approach to paperless Committee meetings in the first instance.
- 2.3 Note that subject to agreement of 2.2 above, consequential changes to the Council's Constitution would be required and therefore Council give delegated authority to the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make such consequential changes.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At the meeting of the Democratic Services Committee on the 12th February, 2018, Members considered the ['Document Management](#)

[Proposals](#) report following a trial of 'Paperless Committee Meetings' by the Cabinet.

- 3.2 Members were advised that the primary benefit of paperless meetings is the elimination of paper. Other benefits of the pilot include financial savings; highlighting the Council as being environmentally responsible, boosting productivity, saving space, and making documentation and information-sharing easier. It also illustrates a modern and forward thinking approach to Committee meetings in a digital age.
- 3.3 Members of the Democratic Services Committee spoke positively as to the roll out of the 'Paperless Committee approach' through the Modern.Gov app and the proposed phased roll out to Members.
- 3.4 Members raised concerns in respect of technical issues with devices, wifi connection and meeting room location facilities going forward and both the Director Cabinet and Public Relations and the Head of ICT provided Members with reassurance that although these issues could not be completely disregarded, contingency plans to reduce such problems would be taken forward.
- 3.5 Members were advised that in addition to publication of Committee papers, the Modern.Gov system would also assist with recording of Member attendance and declarations of interest.
- 3.6 The Modern.Gov app is available in both Welsh and English, with Members being able to choose which app they wish to utilise when accessing Committee papers.
- 3.7 The Director, Cabinet & Public relations advised Members at the meeting that all Members would receive one to one training on the Modern.Gov application to ensure they were comfortable with the new way of working.

4. GOING FORWARD – PHASED APPROACHED

- 4.1 To ensure that Members feel comfortable with the new way of working it is suggested that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each of the Councils Committee's are first to take forward the new way of working before it is rolled out to each of their Committee's. It is proposed that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees, plus Democratic services, Licensing and Planning and Development shall be taken forward in this manner in the first instance.
- 4.2 With the recent change in Committee support functions it is proposed that both Licensing and the Planning and Development Committee will then be rolled out on the Modern.Gov platform for all committee members.

- 4.3 Once Members and officers are comfortable with the system it is proposed that the remaining Committees including Scrutiny and Council are further rolled out on a phased approach, to support RCT becoming a paperless Council in respect of Committee agendas and reports. It is stressed that this phased roll out approach will be run to suit Committee member needs, to ensure that all Members are confident in using the system going forward.
- 4.4 If taken forward, Members will need to provide notification to the Monitoring Officer that they are happy to receive future Committee Summons through electronic means, (as outlined in section 7 of the report below), and assistance in respect of this notification will be provided to Members by the Executive & Regulatory Unit.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The move to paperless working should have no impact on Equalities issues. Electronic mediums such as tablet computers are more user friendly and allow greater accessibility than paper to those with visual impairments as the report can be enlarged very easily on the screen.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The report was considered by the Democratic Services Committee on the 12th February, 2018.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Consideration has been given to the Local Government Act 1972 – (specifically those sections relating to Access to Information), the Local Government Act 2000 and the Council Constitution.
- 7.2 The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 amended Paragraph 4 of Schedule 12 (Meetings and Proceeding of Local Authorities). The amended legislation references that a summons to attend a meeting, of an English Local Authority, specifying the business proposed, can be sent to every member of the council by an ‘appropriate method’.
- 7.3 Reference to sending the summons to a member by an appropriate method includes where the member has given consent for the summons to be transmitted in electronic form to a particular electronic address (and consent has not been withdrawn), sending it in electronic form to that address.
- 7.4 This amendment however does not extend to Wales. Here the position remains as follows:

If a member of a principal council in Wales 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.

- 7.5 Until such time as a similar amendment is made which extends to Wales and clarifies the position exactly delivering the summons to an email address at Members' request is felt to be an adequate compromise between practicality and the purpose of the original legislation which as shown above does not explicitly reference such summons being sent electronically albeit it references such summons being able to be sent to an 'address'. It is therefore considered that sending summons electronically is in compliance with the existing legislation.
- 7.6 In light of the above the Council's Constitution would need to be amended as currently it specifically references receipt of summons by post only, rather than it being able to be sent to an address (which would include an email address) with the consent of the Member.
- 7.7 It must be acknowledged however that it is for each Member to decide how they receive their summons. Subject to agreement to the paperless approach and with the individual Member's consent Members would be requested to sign a document agreeing that their Council summons be delivered to their Council Email 'address', rather than their home address.

8. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ / FUTURE GENERATIONS – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

- 8.1 Living Within our Means - The approach supports the Council's Principle of 'living within our means' by allowing both officers and Members to work in a more streamlined and efficient manner in respect of Committee meetings and therefore, assisting in reducing the Council's running costs in this area.
- 8.2 Corporate Plan Work stream 'Digitalisation' – The move to a paperless approach to Committee meetings would also support the Council's work stream focus in respect of digitalisation.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The pilot of paperless Cabinet meetings is considered to have been successful in assisting the Council with delivering savings and allowing for a more efficient way of accessing papers.

- 9.2 Further adoption of the paperless approach maximises opportunities to make efficiency savings to protect frontline services and highlights the Council as being environmentally responsible, boosting productivity, saving space, and making documentation and information-sharing easier. It also illustrates a modern and forward thinking approach to Committee meetings in a digital age.

- 9.3 The proposed phased roll out approach will be run to suit Committee member needs, to ensure that all Members are confident in using the system going forward.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers

Democratic Services – [12th February, 2018](#)

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