

AGENDA ITEM 9

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

19th MAY 2016

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS – COMMITTEE MEETINGS

JOINT REPORT OF THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET AND GROUP DIRECTOR FOR CORPORATE AND FRONTLINE SERVICES IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, CLLR A MORGAN.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To outline a proposal for Cabinet consideration regarding the implementation of a paperless approach to committee meetings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Approve a pilot of paperless Cabinet Meetings and Cabinet Sub Committee meetings.
- 2.2 Subject to 2.1 above, agree to receive a further report providing feedback on the pilot and, if appropriate, outlining proposals to extend the paperless approach to all committees.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since 2011, the Council has needed to make savings/increase revenue by £76m due to UK Government cuts to public sector funding.
- 3.2 It is anticipated that such cuts to funding are likely to continue until at least 2020 and therefore the Council is committed to identifying and pursuing efficiency savings wherever possible to protect the delivery of frontline services.
- 3.3 The Council has 28 “live” committees in operation including Cabinet, Full Council, Scrutiny Committees, Development Control and Licensing.

- 3.4 Committees meet at varying frequencies throughout the year with agendas and reports printed and distributed to Elected Members, Co-opted Members and relevant officers prior to each committee meeting.
- 3.5 The adoption of a paperless approach to Cabinet Meetings will result in the Council delivering printing, paper and production cost savings as well as permitting Members to access other relevant information during meetings, thereby allowing them to more effectively and efficiently undertake duties. It is therefore proposed that a pilot of paperless committees is carried out for Cabinet to determine whether such an approach is suitable for all committees.

4. PAPERLESS SOLUTION

- 4.1 Officers within the Cabinet Office and ICT have jointly undertaken due diligence to assess options for implementing a paperless approach for Cabinet, whereby technology is exploited to digitally manage agendas and the resultant supporting papers more effectively and efficiently.
- 4.2 Following market testing, software demonstrations and reference visits to other local authorities and organisations in the locality, Modern Gov was identified as the preferred software option to support this solution.
- 4.3 Modern Gov is used by nineteen of the 22 local authorities in Wales and is also used by the National Assembly for Wales.
- 4.4 Modern Gov software allows Committee agendas and reports to be collated and “pushed out” via an app which can be accessed through tablets, laptops and mobile phone devices set up and available to those on the prescribed distribution list.
- 4.5 Once agendas and reports have been published, Members and Officers on the distribution list receive an alert to advise papers are available for download.
- 4.6 The Modern Gov app has a range of annotation tools to allow Members and Officers to make notes, highlight sections etc. as required.
- 4.7 Connectivity is required to download the agenda and report but once downloaded to the device they can be viewed at any time. This maybe undertaken from any location that has connectivity e.g. at home, public Libraries or WiFi hotspots covering members rooms and the Council Chamber.
- 4.8 ICT tablet equipment will be evaluated to assess the opportunities it provides as an alternative to traditional Laptop computers.

5 **BUSINESS CASE**

- 5.1 In 2015/16, the cost of paper and printing in relation to Cabinet agendas and reports was £18k.
- 5.2 The initial capital investment for purchasing the Modern Gov software infrastructure will be met as part of the approved 16/17 ICT investment fund. Operating a paperless approach to cabinet meetings will reduce the annual cost as outlined below

Current Cost versus Proposed (Digital) Costs

	Revenue Yr1	Revenue Yr2	Revenue Yr3
Current Costs "As is"	18k	18k	18k
Revised Costs "To be"	5k	13k	13k
Total Costs / Saving	13k	5k	5k

Net Savings (Revenue)

Yr 1: £ 13k
Yr 2: £ 5k
Yr 3: £ 5k

Total: £ 23k

- 5.3 It should be noted that hardware requirements for Elected Members is budgeted for as part of a rolling refresh programme.
- 5.4 Unlike other potential options, Modern Gov costs do not increase with the addition of further committees so it is expected savings could increase should a decision be taken to adopt a paperless approach to all committees.
- 5.5 An evaluation of the paperless approach for Cabinet and Cabinet Sub Committees would inform a future decision on the roll out to all committees.

6. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no equality or diversity implications attached to this report.

7 **CONSULTATION**

It is proposed that the views of the Democratic Services Committee be sought on the proposal.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

The financial implications are outlined within section 5 of the report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- Consideration has been given to both the Local Government Act 1972 – (Access to Information) and the Local Government Act 2000.
- Council Constitution

10 LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN / OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/ SIP.

Living Within our Means - The proposal will support the Councils 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.

11 CONCLUSION

- 11.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf has had to make savings of £76m since 2011 due to public sector spending reductions which are anticipated to continue until at least 2020.
- 11.2 The Council's Cabinet has made clear its commitment to maximising opportunities to make efficiency savings to protect frontline services.
- 11.3 The introduction of a paperless approach to Cabinet Meetings and Cabinet Sub Committees would reduce paper, printing and production costs, and will generate net revenue savings of £23k over a three year period.
- 11.4 Should a decision be taken to roll out a paperless approach to all Council Committees, further net efficiency savings will be deliverable.

Other Information:-

Relevant Scrutiny Committee – Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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