



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

12th NOVEMBER 2018

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MEMBERS – TELEPHONE AND EMAIL FACILITIES AND ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Authors: Interim Head of Democratic Services & the Head of ICT

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to consider options for the provision of telephony to elected members.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Democratic Services Committee recommend to full Council:

2.1 To provide elected Members with 2 options with regard to the provision of telephony:

Option 1 – elected Members make their own arrangements, pay the associated bill and receive a payment of £19.64 per month as a contribution toward the cost of telephony.

Option 2 – a handset is provided and paid for by the Council (no requirement for elected Members to pay a bill / receive payment from the Council).

2.2. That the arrangements become effective from 1st January 2019 and the estimated annual cost is built into the Council's budget setting arrangements for 2019/20.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 At the Annual Meeting of the Council held on the 23rd May 2018, consideration was given to the report titled "Members' Salaries and Allowances – Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales' (the Panel) Tenth Annual Report. In addition to the recommendations that were agreed, the following was also agreed:-

“That the Panel’s determination that all elected Members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information at no cost to the individual Members be referred to the Democratic Services Committee for review and following completion of such a review, report any proposals to implement this determination back to full Council”.

- 3.2 At the Democratic Services Committee held on the 23rd July 2018, a report was approved proposing that all elected Members be remunerated for costs associated with the provision of home broadband as it was a key enabler to accessing email facilities and electronic records.
- 3.3 The report noted that a separate report would be prepared with regard to the provision of mobile telephony.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council considers the use of telephony to be a valuable asset that enables elected Members to fulfil their duties effectively.
- 4.2 Historically funded mobile telephones have not previously been offered to all elected Members as in the same way ICT equipment has been provisioned.
- 4.3 Currently several elected Members use their own personal mobile phones as part of their day to day duties, with a number also utilising them to access the Council’s secure email. Cabinet Members have historically been offered mobile phones via the Council’s corporate contract to support the delivery of their duties. This contract is with Vodafone, providing inclusive all minutes voice and text along with a fixed data allocation.
- 4.4 Following on, the Panel determined that the Council must ensure all its elected Members are given as much support as necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively and specifically that all elected Members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to information (and should be without cost to individual Members).

5. PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 In line with the determination of the Panel, it is proposed that elected Members are provided with options regarding the arrangements to ensure adequate telephone facilities are made available to support the delivery of their duties.
- These options are:

Option 1 - Individual elected Members make their own arrangements for their own mobile phone (including paying the bill) and be remunerated as a contribution towards these costs.

Option 2 - Council provides elected Members with a mobile phone as part of the corporate contract in place.

- 5.2 A desk-top exercise has been undertaken by Council officers using a smartphone as the basis to estimate the cost of each option and is set out in Table 1.

Table 1 – Estimated cost of each option per elected Member

	Estimated Gross Monthly Cost Per Elected Member £	Payment Method
Option 1 – elected Members making their own arrangements	19.64 ¹	The amount paid via Payroll at the same time as elected Members receive their monthly salary
Option 2 – mobile smartphone provided and paid for directly by the Council	13.75	No payment required to elected Members – costs to be paid for directly by the Council

- 5.3 Moving forward, should any material changes to market prices occur it is proposed that these will be reported to the Democratic Services Committee for consideration and where relevant for onward reporting to Council.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The options set out within the report are based on the principle of all elected Members being treated equally and consistently. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed required for the purposes of this report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Subject to the Democratic Services Committee determining a proposed way forward, this will be reported to full Council for the consideration of all elected Members.

¹ Option 1 (Estimated gross monthly cost per elected member £19.64) – assumes a total deduction for tax and national insurance contributions of 30% from the £19.64 monthly payment (the tax and national insurance deduction percentages will differ based in individual circumstances and is used for estimation purposes only). On this basis, the net payment made to each elected Member would be £13.75 per month.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 8.1 Based on the desk-top exercise set out in paragraph 5.2, the estimated total annual cost of each option (excluding Cabinet members) is set out in Table 2.

Table 2 – estimated total annual cost of each option

	Estimated Gross Monthly Cost Per Elected Member £	No. of Members (excluding Cabinet Members)	Total Estimated Annual Cost £
Option 1 - elected Members making their own arrangements	19.64	66	15,555
Option 2 - mobile phone provided and paid for directly by the Council	13.75	66	10,890

- 8.2 Subject to the decision of full Council, it is proposed that should costs be incurred in 2018/19, these be met from existing resources and thereafter the cost implications built into the Council's budget setting arrangements for 2019/20.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 9.1 The determination of the Panel, as set out in its tenth annual report, is underpinned by the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (as amended).

10. LINKS TO CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 10.1 The provision of appropriate support and resources to elected Members is critical in ensuring the interests of local people are represented, governance of local communities is undertaken and value-for-money public services are secured for local tax-payers through effective scrutiny. The continued ability to effectively fulfil these duties will make a positive contribution to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 The Panel's Tenth Annual Report has determined that all elected Members should be provided with adequate telephone and email facilities and electronic access to appropriate information at no cost to individual elected Members.

11.2 The proposed options set out in this report provide the opportunity for this requirement to be met and ensure the Council's elected Members continue to be provided with the appropriate support and resources to effectively fulfil their duties.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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ITEM: SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MEMBERS - TELEPHONE AND EMAIL FACILITIES AND ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Background Papers

- 23rd May 2018 Council meeting – Report: Members’ salaries and allowances - Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales’ tenth annual report.
- 23rd July 2018 Democratic Services Committee – Report: Supporting the Work of Members – Telephone & Email Facilities and Electronic Access to Information