

Decision maker:	Assistant director communities
Decision date:	Thursday, 10 May 2018
Title of report:	A four month trial of smart phone technology
Report by:	Democratic services manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To approve a four month trial of smart phone technology for use by up to ten local members to allow the council to assess the effectiveness of this technology in terms of risk to information security, support costs and potential for wider roll out. The trial would be supported by Hoople and the democratic services team who will gather evidence and compile a report on the viability/affordability of a possible wider roll out of this technology by the council for use by local members.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) A four month time limited trial of up to ten smart phones is undertaken with up to ten local members to assess the value of smart phone technology to inform the council's future Information Communication Technology (ICT) provision; and**
- (b) Up to ten smart phones are purchased with Hoople supported mobile device management systems as part of the trial at an expected cost of no more than £7.2k.**

Alternative options

1. **Do something different:** Undertake a desk based exercise. This is not recommended as desk based research alone will not allow for evidence gathering from members directly or to practically assess the technology capabilities. However, as part of this trial other local authorities who provide similar technology to their members will be contacted and information gathered. Assessment of the risks, opportunities and support costs has been undertaken through desk based research to set up this trial. 'In field' information from members is required to inform the council about its own costs and risks if any further roll out of this service is considered.
2. **Do nothing:** Maintain the status quo where members currently use their lap-tops/crypto-cards to access their emails and internet/intranet. This is a cost neutral option, but it fails to address a growing number of member's requests to strengthen their remote working and access to emails via smart phone devices. It also fails to address a wider interest that the council has to assess this technology as part of the potential future ICT provision offered by the council.

Key considerations

3. In the recent past, local members were permitted to buy their own ICT devices and were given devolved budgets as part of their allowance scheme to do so. Members bought a range of ICT devices and/or opted to use their own personal devices (including a small number of smart phones). These were supported by the council's secure mobile device management containerisation system (MaaS 360).
4. This approach to ICT provision was reviewed for a number of reasons. A rise in ICT support requests and cost was observed principally relating to devices requiring relatively complex password authentication to access emails, calendars and contacts. In addition, the breadth of devices held by members meant that ICT support needed to cater for a wide range of maintenance demands.
5. Under the council's current arrangements local members are provided with a council owned tablet/laptop device to enable them to fulfil their duties. This in turn has helped reduce costs for both the purchase and maintenance of ICT equipment. Members are required to comply with relevant ICT and information security policies.
6. In recent months, a number of local members have enquired as to whether the council can consider adding smart phone mobile device management support systems to our current suite of ICT facilities. This technology would allow members to access and send council emails, open and edit their council calendars and access their contacts through a smart phone device while travelling or working remotely from council offices.
7. This request, including an examination of costs for a full or partial roll out of such devices to members has been considered. The scope for taking forward a trial has been agreed by the cabinet member for finance and corporate strategy as a helpful way to understand the potential of this technology before any wider roll out is undertaken. The trial will inform our understanding of how members wish to utilise such a device or how assistive this technology may be in comparison to our existing level of ICT provision.
8. In proposing a trial of smart phones a number of elements will be tested. The trial will be run over a four month period and will include gathering evidence on:
 - **The usage** – with quantitative information gathered on data usage, frequency of calls made/received and monthly costs;

- **The ease of usage** – with quantitative information gathered on ICT support requested/provided and the level of cost and complexity associated with that support;
 - **Triangulation** – with other local authorities where members are using smart phones to assess their policies on allocation/supply; the usefulness of this technology to members and what their costs and/or cost savings have been since the introduction of this technology.
 - **Member feedback** – gathering qualitative feedback from members involved in the trial about their experiences and main usage patterns
9. A report on the outcomes of the trial will be compiled by the democratic services team, in conjunction with Hoople and information governance colleagues.
10. This trial will coincide with a wider review of council ICT provision for members as part of our local elections planning for May 2019. The council will be undertaking survey work with members to establish what additional or different ICT provision they would like to see. This proposed trial, should it go ahead, will inform the options for what ICT equipment the council may offer to members after local election in May 2019.

Community impact

11. The corporate plan ensures our essential assets, including ICT, are in the right condition for the long- term, cost-effective delivery of services. Herefordshire Council has committed to deliver against bold and ambitious plans and, by working with our local and national partners, we seek to continue to improve the quality of life for the county's residents. Connected to this plan is a stated aim to further embrace digital technology to save costs and improve mobile working.
12. This trial provides an opportunity to embody this stated aim and provide leadership and example in using modern communication methods that support efficient and effective business delivery at Herefordshire Council.

Equality duty

13. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:
- A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
14. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

15. This trial will be an opportunity to consider how local members are assisted in gaining better access to information. For example, we will explore if members find the devices easier to use or whether they are enabled in different ways to access information. The information gathered may allow the council to assess additional ways in which we can fulfil our public sector equality duty.

Resource implications

16. Funding is available which has been approved as part of the medium term financial strategy. We currently have £9.5k allocated to computer expenditure. The costs of the trial have been estimated at a maximum of £7.2k. This cost has been developed using data from previous member usage of smart phones and containerisation costs.
17. Some minor variability to the final cost may be anticipated. For example, the mobile phones will have a contracted data download limit of 1 gigabyte. If members, during the trial period, were to exceed that limit a monthly charge of £50 would be incurred. In a worst case scenario where ten members exceed data download limits on a monthly basis during the trial a further maximum uplift in cost of £2k would be incurred. The budget noted in 16 above has capacity to absorb that cost. However, this cost is unlikely to be incurred as members will have data limit notifications on the smart phones issued. This will allow members involved in the trial to manage data limits compliant to their contractual agreements. Members will be briefed on this as part of the trial.
18. It is not yet possible to provide any evidence on whether this trial will deliver costs savings. However, this trial will help to establish whether any cost savings could be achieved.
19. Information governance colleagues have advised that if this trial is agreed to members would have to be issued with a council device. This rules out the option of members utilising their own smart phones to access council data and information (*sometimes referred to as Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)*). The purchase of up to ten smart phones would, therefore, be through the 'E-E' contract – Hoople's existing supplier.
20. It is important to explain that although this trial is proposed to last for four months, as a result of purchasing the smart phones, we will enter into a two year agreement with the supplier. In this regard it is anticipated that the smart phones would either be retained by the members after the trial has taken place; or the phones would be returned to Hoople and entered in to the general pool of ICT devices and recycled to officers required to hold smart phones.

Legal implications

8. There are no significant legal implications arising from this report: information security requirements will be addressed by ensuring that the purchased devices are configured and used in accordance with information security best practice.

Risk management

21.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
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Risk 1: Members lose, or have stolen, their smart phones and official and/or confidential council documents might be shared with non-intended recipients.

Mitigation 1: Each smart phone will be supported by the council's secure mobile device management containerisation system (MaaS 360). This ensures that information contained on the phones is password protected. In addition, this enables the council to wipe information from the phones if a phone is lost or stolen.

Risk 2: The public see this exercise as an un-necessary waste of public money.

Mitigation 2: As part of this trial costs and potential cost savings will be monitored and reported on. Smart phone technology is an increasingly common form of ICT device used by business. The council is interested to explore what role it might play in supporting our business moving forward.

Opportunity: As a result of undertaking this trial, we assist members to undertake their local duties more flexibly.

Mitigation 3: The usage of smart phones will be monitored throughout the trial. The outcome of the trial will be reported on and fed into wider considerations about the type of ICT devices and support the council provides members longer term.

22. The associated risks will be managed at a service level and entered on the election planning project risk register.

Consultees

23. The cabinet member for finance and corporate strategy and the director for economy, communities and corporate have been consulted on the proposals to conduct a small scale trial of smart phone technology. During this consultation, three costed options were considered. The first was to propose a full member roll out of smart phones. The second was to provide a limited roll out of smart phones to members – principally to members who wish to use a smart phone as part of their council work. And finally, to propose a small scale trial of smart phones for up to ten members for a time limited period to assess their use and effectiveness.
24. The preferred way forward is to undertake a time-limited trial with up to ten members. Members would be selected on a demand led basis, insofar as, members will volunteer to take part in the trial. If more than ten members seek to take part in the trial, political group leaders will be consulted to select members from their group on a political proportionality basis.
25. Group leaders were invited to comment on the proposals to undertake this trial. Two responses were received which both sought to register an interest in a member of their group taking part in the trial. All members will be contacted again if this decision is agreed with a view to encouraging members with a range of different roles to take part in the trial. This will allow the council to assess the differing types of use and need to inform whether smart phone technology forms part of the council's ICT offer moving forward.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified