

Decision maker:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Decision date:	Wednesday, 30 January 2019
Title of report:	Digital Strategy Funding – members ICT
Report by:	Democratic Services Manager

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

The purpose of this report is to agree the Information Communication Technology (ICT) requirements of new and returning ward members following the local election on 2 May, 2019. This is in line with the council's Digital Strategy to utilise digital technology for staff and councillors to work flexibly, responsively and making the most of technology to deliver services.

Existing members have been consulted on their current requirements and options for the future; in addition some existing members have participated in a trial of smartphone technology and the outcome of these has informed the recommendation to provide all members with a laptop and to provide all members with the option to also use a smartphone.

The 2018/19 spend from reserves will enable a new ICT package to be procured with delegated authority to the assistant director corporate services to award contract.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the following IT equipment for all members elected in May 2019 be purchased at a cost of not more than £100k:**
- 53 laptops -

- **53 smart phones be purchased on rolling two year contracts (up to a total of 4 years)**

(b) The assistant Director Corporate Support be authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the above recommendation.

Alternative options

1. The purchase is not made. This is not advisable as many of the existing laptops issued to members are four years old and no longer under warranty.
2. That spend takes place in 2019/20 financial year for activity to be funded from the ICT base budget. This is not recommended as would result in a delay in activity when progress is needed this financial year.
3. That only lap-tops are provided with no option for smartphone deployment. This is not advised as following a trial of using smart phones with eight members there is good evidence to suggest that this technology allows members to work more effectively and efficiently on behalf of their constituents and in dealing with council business.
4. That members purchase their own IT through an allowance. This is not advisable as members need a certain specification to access software relating to council business. This option has been tried in the recent past, but proved problematic in solving any faults when not standard equipment resulting in increased support costs. In addition, the council has to meet government data security standards which could potentially be compromised if unsupported devices were purchased by members. Additionally value for money could not be demonstrated consistently, particularly where new members were joining the council with less than a full four year term of office. Returning to this model would not present a cost effective option either as the council has already tested the market with suppliers to ensure best value for money is achieved. Preferred suppliers have been identified and a framework agreement is in place (see 12 below).

Key considerations

5. The council's digital strategy was approved on 13 July 2018 ([link](#)) and outlined key objectives in using digital technology to enable and support the operation of the council and meeting residents' needs.
6. The new strategy reflects that digital services are a critically important organisational asset, and like other key assets (e.g. staff, finance, and property) needs proactive management to maximise its value for residents and operation of the council. The objective in the strategy relating to the recommendations in this report is "Empowered workforce – to utilise digital technology for staff and councillors to work flexibly, responsively and making the most of the technology to deliver services". Council members, as with council staff, are expected to work electronically reducing the need to use paper, print and postage along with working in an agile way to access information and use electronic communications.
7. The replacement of IT equipment after 4-5 years of use is part of a necessary operational requirement and business practice for high use equipment. The existing stock of member lap-tops will be retained for spare parts and a small number retained as spares to address any accidental damage or non-warranty covered repairs to new lap-tops.
8. In terms of the purchase of the type of equipment, a four month trial of smart phone technology was undertaken with eight members from July to October 2018. The trial was designed to allow the council to assess the effectiveness of this technology in terms of

viability, risk to information security, support costs and potential for wider roll out to assess the value of technology ([link](#)).

9. The results of that trial have indicated that members have found the ability to view and reply to emails whilst working remotely from council offices very helpful. They have noted that they are able to respond more quickly to their constituents and for those members who commute to work outside of the county it enables them to keep track of council business. The calendars have also proven useful as it is a prompt to them of when they have meetings.
10. The phones are more limited in enabling editor access to agendas and papers, although they can be used for reference. This type of committee activity undertaken by all councillors means that use of laptops is still an ICT requirement.
11. This report seeks approval to spend up to £100k for the following required items:
 - The purchase of 53 laptops to be issued immediately following the election
 - Up to 53 smart phones to be issued with consecutively running two year contracts (for a four year period in total), to cover the administrative term (from May 2019 to May 2023), on a demand led basis to members.
12. The proposed procurement approach will be to purchase the required lap-tops and smartphones through existing contract arrangements: contract for the 'For the Supply of End User Computing via European Electronique'; and contract for the provision of Mobile Telephony Services via 'EE', respectively.

Community impact

13. The ICT strategy supporting the delivery of the council's [corporate plan](#) has strong links to the council's [communication strategy](#) and council's workplace and workforce approaches and plans.
14. The corporate plan includes ensuring 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 local and national partners 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.

Equality duty

15. 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.

16. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on councils 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.
17. The council endeavours to ensure that the work they and their partners undertake, does not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of staff or members of the public. The health and safety information stored within the ICT system is vital to demonstrate the council has adequate controls in place. Therefore council partners are expected to ensure systems are sufficiently robust to protect such information, as far as is reasonably practicable.
18. As part of the induction process we will also ensure that any disability access issues are identified so that we can consider making reasonable adjustments as necessary.

Resource implications

19. One off funding will be via £50k allocated reserve for members ICT created as part of the forward planning of replacement PCs for members as a result of the local elections. The remaining funds will be from a combination of 2018/19 IT revenue budget and ICT earmarked reserve. The resource section of the cabinet member report of 13 July 2018 outlined: *The resourcing of the activity outlined in the strategy will be from existing and agreed expenditure. Over and above existing spend will be subject to formal decision*

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Future Years	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
<i>Costs of lap-tops and bags (C)</i>	42,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	42,000.00
<i>Ongoing costs for lap-tops – (R) (this is covered by our existing Service Level Agreement)</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Cost of smart phones, protective cases and tempered glass (C)</i>	11,872.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,872.00
<i>Cost of Smartphones 2 X's 2 yearly contracts per member and MaaS licenses for all members (R)</i>	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	26,500.00
TOTAL					80,372.00

Revenue budget implications	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Future Years	Total
	£	£	£	£	£

<i>Ongoing costs – smartphones (R)</i>	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	26,500.00
<i>Ongoing costs – Lap-tops (R)</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	6,625.00	26,500.00

Legal implications

20. There are no significant legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

21.

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Cost more than expected.	The cost will be tested through procurement and/or framework, and if beyond an “up to” amount a further report will be produced.
Possible adverse publicity	The purchase of equipment is a business requirement, and supports the members to conduct their duties effectively and efficiently with the aid of technology common used by residents and businesses.
Changing nature of ICT	Need for investment using the ICT reserve to keep programmes and activity up to date.

Consultees

22. Group leaders were consulted on the proposals to renew their ICT equipment in July 2018, with a view that new ICT equipment would be in place after the May 2019 election. During this discussion group leaders recognised the need to ensure that ICT equipment issued to members was appropriate to their business needs. It was advocated that all members be consulted on proposals to purchase new equipment – paying particular regard to feedback on the experiences of using their current ICT equipment. This in turn should inform the type of ICT equipment purchased to replace existing lap-tops.

23. In addition, group leaders were consulted on the proposals to undertake a trial of smartphone technology, not a current provision in the council’s ICT offer to members. It was proposed that up to ten members from across the political groups be invited to volunteer for a four month pilot of using smartphones to support their council duties. The purpose of the trial would assess whether smartphone technology should be incorporated in to the ICT offer for members, following the May 2019 elections.

24. In line with the consultation response from group leaders, a survey of members’ ICT requirements was undertaken in July 2018 (see Appendix 1). Within this survey members were asked to provide feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the council’s current ICT provision and, invited to indicate what future ICT provision would most suitably meet their needs. The democratic services team received 26 responses, 25 via the online survey and 1 via email correspondence.

25. Of those responses, 48% indicated support for a lap-top and smartphone package, 16% indicating support for a lap-top with 3/4G capability, and 36% of respondents indicating support for a standard lap-top. It is proposed, following this survey, to issue all members with laptops accompanied with a demand led roll out of smart phones to those members who request this technology to support their council business activities. Of the type of use members responded in the following way:

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I use it for accessing committee agenda's and papers when I am in council meetings (using Modern.Gov app)	92.00% 23
I use it for accessing committee agenda's and papers (using the Modern.Gov app) when travelling, working remotely or from home	76.00% 19
I use it to access my emails, the internet and the intranet at home	96.00% 24
I use it to access my emails, the internet and intranet when working from a council office	88.00% 22
I use it for research to assist me in council and constituency business	72.00% 18
I do not use my council issued Laptop	0.00% 0
Other (please specify) Responses	24.00% 6
Total Respondents: 25	

26. From July to November, eight ward members volunteered to take part in a smartphone trial. That trial has allowed 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 was supported by Hoople and the democratic services team. Evidence was gathered and a short report compiled on the viability/affordability of a possible wider roll out of this technology by the council for use by local members. See appendix 2

Appendices

Appendix 1: Members ICT Survey

Appendix 2: Outline report from the four month smartphone trial.

Background papers

None.