ICT – MEMBERS' REMOTE ACCESS – RESPONSE TO OSP CALL-IN

To:	**Overview & Scrutiny Panel – 11th March 2014**
Main Portfolio Area:	**Business Corporate & Regulatory services (EK Services – Shared Services)**
By:	**Sean Hale, Head of ICT, EK Services**
Classification:	**Unrestricted**
Ward:	**Thanet wide**

Summary:	**This report provides response to the questions raised against the report, ICT – MEMBERS' REMOTE ACCESS, that was presented to the Extraordinary Cabinet on 20th February 2014.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 In order to deliver some of the Council's statutory responsibilities and to communicate securely with other public sector bodies, we are required to access a secure government network called Public Sector Network (PSN). We must have access to this network in order to send and receive data from central government; the key data we receive allows the payment of local people's housing benefit claims.

1.2 Access to this network is only granted to organisations that have received a certificate of compliance issued by Central Government - the Cabinet Office. Previously this access had been controlled by Code of Connection (CoCo).

1.3 During the late summer of 2013 the new PSN regime was introduced with a more stringent set of criteria than CoCo. EKS have been working through these requirements on a stage by stage basis the remaining issue is remote access into the Council's network.

1.4 Due to these requirements on secure access, Elected Members will no longer be able to use non-council equipment to access emails and Council information remotely.

2.0 The Current Situation

2.1 The report 'ICT – MEMBERS' REMOTE ACCESS' presented to the Extraordinary Cabinet on the 20th February outlined the current issues and set out options to address these.

2.2 Two options were proposed; a) to provide members with a council owned laptop or b) to provide members with a council owned tablet (iPad).

2.3 EK Services recommended option b) following a cost and functionality analysis provided in the report.

2.4   The decision was subsequently called in and section 3 details the reasons for call-in with appropriate responses provided by EK Services.

3.0   Call-in Q&A

3.1   Question 1:

Insufficient consideration appears to have been given for Members who don't have WiFi at home. The solution offered is impractical.

3.1.1   EKS Comment:

It is recognised that whilst Wifi and Internet access is generally considered ubiquitous in the home, some members may not have this level of access. In terms of how those Members currently undertake council business electronically the implementation of iPads is unlikely to significantly change this; Members currently have to travel to a location where there is a PC/Laptop available to use and in some cases this may mean visiting a council building.

3.1.2   In addition to being a common feature in many homes, Wifi is available in public places and often promoted as an incentive to visit many cafes, bars, supermarkets and similar establishments, and Members may find that the iPad offers them access in a closer more convenient location to their home.

3.1.3   Most broadband providers will now provide a free Wifi device as part of their service.

3.1.4   Subject to approval by Thanet District Council finance, an option for members who don't have Wifi access at home is the addition of 3 or 4G services on the iPad allowing the iPad to work like a mobile phone. This was mentioned in the original report but not recommended. This enhanced access increases the cost of the iPad by approximately £80 per unit and requires a mobile SIM card on a data contract which, if supplied by Thanet District Council, is in the region of £15 per month subject to usage thresholds.

3.2   Question 2:

Insufficient consideration appears to have been given for members of the public to have access to agendas when attending meetings.

3.2.1   EKS Comment:

Work has started to enhance and extend the reach of the Modern.Gov system used by Thanet District Council – this will give members of the public free access to public documents via their own tablet device by using the Modern.Gov app.

3.2.2   Democratic Services are looking at the possibility of projecting agendas in the chamber for the public or possibly having some paper copies available. It is a phased approach so options are currently being considered.

3.3   Question 3:

There is no cost comparison for the version of iPad on offer. My research indicates that £360 is rather expensive for a basic iPad.

3.3.1   EKS Comment:

The price quoted of £360 covers the cost of the device and a hard protective cover; prices have come down again since (the device is currently £307 and a cover is £35). In addition, cheaper, non-Apple covers are now becoming available for the proposed

version, but this price is considered accurate for budgeting purposes. The latest version was recommended for 'future-proofing' reasons – making the device better able to deal with subsequent software upgrades and therefore extending its practical life; it is also smaller and lighter, making it more convenient to carry around.

3.4   Question 4:

No consideration has been given for Members requiring access to electronic papers in other parts of the building,

3.4.1   EKS Comment:

A project is being considered to provide full Wifi access throughout the building, and work has begun to commission access in the Chamber. There is currently WiFi in the Business Suite area and this would be upgraded as part of the overall project to introduce WiFi to the building.

3.5   Question 5:

Will the WiFi be sufficiently robust to allow upwards of 60 devices all to access simultaneously?

3.5.1   EKS Comment:

The installed Wifi will be a robust, commercial grade solution – of a much higher standard than a domestic style WiFi solution and would be able to support all the Members and staff, as well as public access.

3.6   Question 6:

There is no comparison about what happens at other Authorities.

3.6.1   EKS Comment:

Kent County Council offer iPads to their Members, Canterbury City Council have already issued iPads to some Members and is now going to issue to all. Dover District Council has agreed provision of iPads for all Members. Research with Modern.Gov shows usage of their app by 120 Authorities throughout the UK.

3.7   Question 7:

The Council's procedure rules are unclear about the use of electronic equipment during meetings; no proposal is made regarding this.

3.7.1   EKS Comment:

Electronic equipment is already used to record some meetings, both video and audio. The IT view is that as committee documents are stored on the iPad and allow users to make notes on them, it becomes an equivalent/alternative to a paper based system, so the current rules could apply.

3.8   Question 8:

What arrangements are to be made to ensure that in the event of a failure during a meeting IT expertise is on hand to resolve any issues to allow the meeting to continue?

3.8.1 EKS Comment:

Documents are stored on the iPad (in advance of the meeting from an external location or the member room) in which case there should be no technical issues. With regard to the planned WiFi provision in the Chamber, EK Services intends to install 2 connection points: This would provide maximum capacity and allow for continuation of the Wifi service should a unit fail. This approach has already been used successfully elsewhere in the partnership.

3.9   Question 9:

How will Members access 'pink' papers currently only available on the Councils intranet?

3.9.1 EKS Comment:

The above reference at Point 3.2.1 mentions the upgrade of the Modern.Gov system. This allows for the confidential 'pink' papers to be made available in a similar but secure way. Thanet District Council Democratic Services staff would be responsible for both the publishing of documents and the setting up of accounts for Members to access 'pinks'.

3.10   Question 10:

What arrangements, if any are in place to indemnify Members in the case of loss or damage to the iPad?

3.10.1 EKS Comment:

Members will be asked to sign a Thanet District Council indemnity form which provides insurance cover for the iPad if forcibly removed from the members' person or home, but will not cover damage in transit. Thanet District Council's insurance officer will be able to further clarify the exact terms and conditions in due course.

4.0   Recommendation(s)

4.1   To agree the use of Tablets for all Members based on a lower unit cost, portability and ease of use. But, with a review period after three months to identify further requirements e.g. training, accessories etc.

4.2   To move towards electronic agendas in a phased approach in order to deliver the ongoing savings identified.

4.3   To cease the use of auto forwarding to personal emails once council equipment has been issued to all Members.

4.4   To produce a policy document that identifies the processes and procedures required when using tablets and Councillor emails and for that policy to be considered by the Constitutional Review Working Party, Standards and Council.

5.0   Decision Making Process

5.1   The Overview and Scrutiny Panel can call-in executive decisions and offer recommendations to Cabinet. The final decision rests with Cabinet.

| Contact Officer: | (Sean Hale, Head of ICT, EK Services) |
| Reporting to: | (Donna Reed, Director of EK Services, Shared Services) |

Annex List

None	N/A

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance	Matthew Sanham, Finance Manager (Service Support)
Legal	Harvey Patterson, Corporate & Regulatory Services Manager