

POLICY TO COVER THE USE OF ELECTRONIC TABLETS BY COUNCILLORS

Cabinet	17 November 2016
Report Author	Nick Hughes, Committee Services Manager
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Crow-Brown, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance Services
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	No
Ward:	N/A

Executive Summary:

This paper introduces the concept of an Policy to cover the use of Ipads (hereafter referred to as tablets) by Councillors which clarifies and confirms amendments deemed necessary to the way that ICT equipment is both distributed, used and returned.

The Policy specifies expectations regarding the return of tablets when Councillors cease office, the use of Email and the process regarding replacement of broken or stolen tablets. It also highlights the current consultation regarding the new suite of Information Governance Policies that will complement this policy. It is important to note that this policy complements the suite of ICT policies and in no way is designed to replace to override them.

In accordance with corporate standards the policy also articulates the requirement for Councillors to only use official Thanet District Council email addresses for Council business and the requirement to include an official disclaimer.

The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 allows the Council to issue electronic copies of meeting summonses, subject to written consent from each Councillor. In order to facilitate this transition, Councillors are asked to agree to receive meeting summonses electronically as part of the Policy.

Recommendation(s):

That Cabinet approves the Councillor Tablet usage policy.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Financial and Value for Money

There are no direct financial implications as a result of the Policy, however the Policy facilitates a move towards paperless agendas which could provide the Council with a print cost and despatch saving. In addition, the Policy clarifies the Council's expectations regarding replacement of equipment if lost or damaged, and a returns policy for collecting the tablets when Councillors cease to be in office. This should help to reduce the amount of equipment the Council is required to replace and its associated cost.

<p>Legal</p>	<p>In order to move towards the provision of paperless committee agendas, the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 required Councillors consent to receive summons via electronic communication. This consent has been requested as part of the Policy.</p> <p>Whilst it is hoped that the Council would never need to, if the Council found itself pursuing a Councillor for the return of a tablet via legal channels, such as the small claims court, a written and signed policy agreement would strengthen the Council's case.</p> <p>The Policy is an agreement of the terms of usage which incorporates the Council's IT usage policies. By signing up to this policy Councillors could be held to account if the equipment is misused or abused.</p>
<p>Corporate</p>	<p>The implementation of a Councillor tablet Usage Policy would lead to a reduction in corporate risk as the policy specifies how the tablets should be used, precautions that should be taken, and what to do if something goes wrong.</p> <p>The Policy meets the Council's corporate priorities and values as follows:</p> <p>A clean and welcoming Environment The Policy offers Councillors the opportunity to receive meeting summonses in an electronic format. Councillors who consent to this will be reducing the Council's carbon footprint by reducing the environmental impact of printing and delivering paper.</p> <p>Supporting neighbourhoods The Policy includes recommendations on how to use the tablet responsibly outside of the Council building. This supports Councillors to conduct their duties within the community.</p> <p>Delivering value for money The Policy would help to facilitate a move away from the production and distribution of paper committee agendas. This has the potential to save Council officer time and money while still providing Councillors with the relevant information upon which to make decisions. If Councillors decided to use their tablets to access committee agenda packs, they would be more fully utilising the potential of the equipment which extracts additional value for money from the product.</p> <p>Supporting the Workforce The Policy supports Officers and Councillors by clarifying expectations regarding the usage and return of the tablets.</p> <p>Promoting open communications The Policy encourages modern, responsible communication best practice. This includes specifying the need to use official Council email accounts when conducting Council business, which is essential to comply with freedom of information request requirements. In addition the Policy also specifies what type of material should not be communicated, and the requirement to include the official Council disclaimer.</p>
<p>Equalities Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty</p>	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity</p>

	<p>between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td style="width: 10%;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>A copy of the Customer Impact screen is attached at Annex 2 to the report.</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,		Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it		Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	
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CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓	
A clean and welcoming Environment	✓
Promoting inward investment and job creation	
Supporting neighbourhoods	✓

CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓	
Delivering value for money	✓
Supporting the Workforce	✓
Promoting open communications	✓

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 All district Councillors have been issued with Ipads (referred to in this report and the accompanying policy as tablets) to allow secure access and management of the Councillor's email account; access to committee agendas (including confidential agendas) electronically; and generally assist in the conduct of Councillor duties.
- 1.2 Although Councillors have been using Council tablets for a number of years, no official usage policy has been in place. There have been occasions when this has caused some difficulty for example when Councillors have been required to return tablets, or when tablets have required repairs or replacement. The Policy intends to address these issues and incorporates Thanet District Council's IT policies to bring the use of Councillor tablets in line with corporate IT usage standards.
- 1.3 Councillors currently have the ability to view committee agendas electronically using the tablet via the Mod.Gov application; however it was a requirement to issue meeting summonses to Councillors in paper form which has obstructed any transition from a combined paper and electronic system to a solely electronic one. Since the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 came into force in January 2015 it is now possible, with the consent of the Councillor, to issue the meeting summons in an electronic format. The policy includes a declaration for Councillors to consent to receive the meeting summons electronically.

2.0 Why is there a need for a policy?

- 2.1 Democratic Services have experienced a number of issues with regard to the distribution and collection of the Tablets delivered to members. This proves to be a major issue when Councillors cease being Councillors and new Councillors are

elected, this is an issue particularly around election time. As there are currently no guidelines returning ICT equipment, Democratic Services are solely reliant upon the awareness of Councillors to return their equipment. This has led to additional administrative burden on the Democratic Services team chasing Councillors to return equipment, unfair timescales being placed on East Kent ICT to prepare the returned equipment for new Councillors and ultimately avoidable delays in getting equipment to new Councillors.

- 2.2 In addition, whilst there are policies on the use of the internet and email via the Tablet, there is no policy on how Members treat their Tablet, neither is there any formal agreement to the levels of support Members can receive from Officers or how Members should report issues with their Tablet. For these reasons Democratic Services have created a draft policy covering these issues.
- 2.3 The original policy was presented to a Members Briefing on 6 September 2016 and Democratic Services have then amended the draft policy based upon the feedback received from Councillors at that briefing.

3.0 What is in the Policy?

- 3.1 The Policy is split in to six main parts. These are: What Members can expect from Officers, What Officers can expect from Members, The return and recovery of equipment, E-Mail key messages, Information Security Policies Overview and the provision of electronic agendas.

3.2 What Members can expect from Officers?

- 3.2.1 The Policy specifies the times between which Democratic Services and East Kent IT Services are available to support Councillors in the use of their tablets, both for use of the app and Tablet itself. In addition it records that Thanet District Council will offer Members regular training on the use of the Modern.gov App and that where practicable provide Members with a temporary replacement Tablet in the event that theirs ceases to work.

3.3 What can Officers expect from Members?

- 3.3.1 The Policy details the responsibilities of Members including, who to contact if their tablet is lost, stolen or broken, and what circumstances would lead to replacement costs being borne by the Councillor or by the Council. In order to ensure the protection of Council budgets, the Policy details the expectation that Councillors will take responsibility for the safe keeping of their tablets. We are suggesting these contributions as Democratic services feel that these amounts are a fair reflection on the cost to Democratic Services, who are a small team with a limited budget for replacement equipment.

The circumstances regarding liability for the cost to replace tablets can be summarised as follows:

- If the tablet is lost, broken, or stolen (as a result of negligence on the part of the Councillor) then the Councillor would be expected to pay for the cost of a replacement which would be provided by EK ICT.
- If the equipment ceases to work as a result of reasonable wear and tear or due to a fault, it would be fixed or replaced at no cost to the Councillor.

3.4 The return and recovery of equipment

- 3.4.1 The Policy reminds members for the avoidance of any doubt that all of the equipment given to Councillors in their role is the property of the Council at all times.
- 3.4.2 In addition, to clarify the Council's expectation regarding timescales for the return of tablets when a Councillor is no longer in office, the policy specifies that tablets must be returned within one week, this should ensure that the tablets can be prepared and reissued to newly elected Councillors in a timely fashion.

3.5 E-Mail Key Messages

- 3.5.1 The Policy reminds Councillors that should be using the official Council disclaimer at the end of their E-Mails and explains how this can be done. In addition it re-emphasises that Councillors should use their "@thanet.gov.uk" E-Mail address when conducting official business.

3.6 Information Security Policies

- 3.6.1 In February 2015 the three SIROs (Senior Information Risk Owner) and their deputies of the Councils of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet together with key staff from EKS (ICT), EKHR and EKAP formed the East Kent Corporate Information Governance Group.
- 3.6.2 The main objective of the group was to improve the management and security of information held and used by the Councils, provide support to the SIROs and to develop an Information Security and Governance Framework and an associated suite of Information Governance Policies for the three Councils.
- 3.6.3 The overarching framework and associated policies are now out for consultation with staff and Members, with the aim of adoption by each Council in early 2017. The suite of policies is available here: <https://sites.google.com/a/ict.ekservices.org/cigg-policy-consultation/>
- 3.6.4 Whilst this policy is not directly linked to these policies it is complementary to a number of them and it is imperative that Members participate in the consultation and abide by the policies when they come in to force, hence the mention in the policy.

3.7 The provision of electronic meeting summonses

- 3.7.1 Councillors currently receive paper summonses to meetings of the Committees to which they are members. However, since January 2015 the Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 now allows for the provision of meetings summonses electronically subject to the consent of the Councillor. The Policy requests Councillors consent to receive summonses in an electronic format by signing a declaration.

4.0 Signing up to the Policy

- 4.1 If the policy is approved then a copy of the policy will then be sent to all Councillors, Councillor should sign the policy and then return it to Democratic Services.
- 4.2 If a member feels that they cannot sign up to the content of the policy then they should contact Democratic Services to discuss any particular concerns that they may have.

5.0 Options

5.1 Cabinet should consider the Draft tablet Usage Policy and either;

- a) approve the draft policy, or;
- b) make any amendments they see fit and approve the draft policy;
- c) Do not approve the draft policy.

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Reporting to:	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex List

Annex 1	Draft Councillor Tablet Usage Policy
Annex 2	Customer Impact Screen

Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
N/A	N/A

Corporate Consultation

Finance	Matt Sanham, Corporate Finance Manager
Legal	Tim Howes, Director of Corporate Governance & Monitoring Officer