Cherwell District Council

Council

18 May 2022

IT provision for Members

Report of Interim Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services and Interim Monitoring Officer

This report is public

Purpose of report

A review of Members' Allowances was considered by the 28 February 2022 Council meeting, which included a proposal from the Independent Remuneration Panel to introduce an IT allowance to ensure a consistent approach for all councillors. Members requested officers to review this proposal and submit a revised proposal to this meeting.

Accordingly, this report seeks approval of the proposed approach to IT provision for Members. The proposals are designed to ensure that Members are equipped with the IT support they need to perform their role as CDC councillors. The IT provision and IT support need to be sufficiently robust to safeguard CDC and individual Members from cyber-attacks and data security breaches.

1.0   Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

1.1   To approve the principles governing the provision of IT as set out in paragraph 3.1.

1.2   To agree to establish a dedicated budget for Members' IT.

1.3   To delegate authority to the Interim Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services and Interim Monitoring Officer and Director of Digital & IT, in consultation with the Lead Member whose portfolio includes IT, to draft a Members' IT Policy, setting out acceptable IT usage and the support Members can expect.

1.4   To agree to roll out the provision of laptops and mobile phones to all new Members following the elections in May 2022.

2.0   Introduction

2.1   The present arrangements for Member IT support are ad-hoc, with some councillors having IT equipment provided by CDC and others not. The level of IT equipment among Members who have it is also not consistent.

2.2   In a recent review of Members' allowances, it was considered by the Independent Review Panel (IRP) that there should be a consistent approach to IT provision, and on advice from IT Services, the IRP considered that a £300 allowance would provide a level of consistency.

2.3   At Full Council on 28 February 2022, Members received a report on the Members' Allowance Scheme, and asked officers to reconsider the recommendation of the IRP that replaced IT equipment with a one- off allowance of £300 per annum and submit a revised proposal to the May Council meeting.

2.4   The IT service, together with Democratic Service leads, have now reviewed the IRP's recommendation, and propose the approach set out below.

3.0   Report Details

3.1   In reviewing the IT provision, the guiding principles, which Members are asked to endorse are:

    i.   All Members should have access to a consistent level of IT equipment;
    ii.   The IT support should enable Members to properly carry out their role;
    iii.   IT officer support should be available to ensure the IT equipment runs smoothly, and software is updated on a regular basis;
    iv.   CDC and Members individually should be protected against the risk of cyber attack, malware being brough into CDC systems and from data security breaches;
    v.   IT support should be complimentary to the Council's other policies on cyber security, data security and climate change;
    vi.   Members should have the same level of IT flexibility as officers.

3.2   As part of the package of support for Members to perform their role, IT support is key. Members need access to email, calendar, Teams and access to both the mod.gov app for publicly available papers and for relevant committees, restricted papers.

3.3   Members should also have access to the currently under-utilised Members' Portal, which operates as a 'one stop shop' of on-line member support. The portal has a wealth of useful data on it, such as links to past training materials, links to the LGA's guidance, induction documents, the Constitution and so on. It acts as a Members' intranet.

3.3   In order to ensure the principles at 3.1 are met, it is proposed that all Members are provided with a CDC laptop, with the applications set out in paragraph 3.2 pre-loaded. A mobile phone will also be provided to those Members who wish to have a CDC mobile phone, with access to the above applications. CDC provided laptops will enable Members to fully carry out their role as a CDC councillor and Members

will be encouraged to use these devices for CDC work, as they have the appropriate levels of cyber security software installed and provide a high level of protection against cyber attacks.

3.4 Members may have personal devices or devices from other public organisations. If Members wish to use those devices to check emails, they may do so, but those devices will not have the mod.gov restricted app or the Members' portal installed, nor can CDC IT provide any support in the event CDC applications do not function on those devices. These limitations need to be borne in mind when using non CDC equipment. A Members' IT policy will be drafted, setting out the risks and implications of using non CDC devices, so that Members are fully aware of the implications.

3.5 Dual-hatted Members (councillors who are both a Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) councillor) may already have OCC laptops which they use for CDC work. As the two organisations de-couple, the need for separation of data sharing will become very important and in order to safeguard confidential and sensitive information, Members should ensure that they only use CDC equipment to access CDC officers and data. It will be for OCC to determine what OCC Members can access on OCC devices.

4.0   Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 At the 28 February 2022 Full Council meeting, Members received a report on the Members' Allowance Scheme, and asked officers to reconsider the recommendation of the Panel that replaced the provision of IT equipment with a one- off allowance of £300 per annum.

4.2 The IT service, together with Democratic Service leads, have now reviewed the IRP's recommendation, and consider that the approach set out in the report, including the guiding principles, ensure an open, transparent approach to enable Members to fulfil their roles whilst ensuring the council is protected from the risk of cyber attack.

5.0   Consultation
Director of Digital and IT
Head of IT Services
Governance and Elections Manager
Corporate Leadership team
Executive

6.0   Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To continue with the current arrangements. This is not recommended as the current approach is inconsistent and ad-hoc meaning Members do not receive the same level of IT provision and support.

Option 2: To adopt the recommendation of the Panel to introduce a £300 allowance. This is not recommended as the use of personal devices increases the risk of cyber attack as no consistent cyber security software would be applied.

7.0   Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1   There will be a one-off capital cost of £28000 for laptops, assuming all Members will require a laptop and £169 for a mobile phone, together with a licence fee of £65 per phone.

7.2   There is currently no specific Members' IT budget in existence and it is proposed that one is created, to be funded from reserves.

Comments checked by:
Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 01295 221845
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Legal Implications

7.2   The Council has an obligation to adhere to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. The recommended proposal improves data security arrangements.

Comments checked by:
 Shahin Ismail, Interim Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer, Shahin.ismail@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Risk Implications

7.3   There are risks associated with the use of IT equipment and the extensive damage that can be cause by misuse or breaches of data security. This proposal aims to ensure appropriate access to, and use of the council's IT equipment to help mitigate the risk of harm to individuals, the council's reputation, potential legal action and/or fines, inappropriate use of council resources, viruses and other malicious software, and service disruption. Also, these risks will be accordingly managed as part of the council's risk management strategy.

Comments checked by:
Celia Prado-Teeling, Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus, 01295 221556
Celia.Prado-Teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Equalities and Inclusion Implications

7.4   The proposal ensures that there is a consistent and transparent approach to IT provision and support for all Members.

Comments checked by:
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8.0 Decision Information

Key Decision

Financial Threshold Met: **N/A**

Community Impact Threshold Met: **N/A**

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

N/A

Lead Councillor

N/A

Document Information
Appendix number and title
- None

Background papers
None

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