

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

1.	Meeting:	Deputy Leader
2.	Date:	November 19th 2012
3.	Title:	Tablet Computing
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a trial of RMBC issued tablet computers as a potential alternative to RMBC issued laptops.

6. Recommendations

The Deputy Leader is asked to:

- **Support the proposed trial of tablet devices amongst Members.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Background

The RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015) includes an increase in mobile working among RMBC Members and employees as one of its aims. The ICT Strategy capital budget includes provision for the purchase of tools to foster more agile working.

The Town Hall and Eric Manns buildings have a WiFi network throughout and all meeting rooms and stations in the Council Chamber have power and network points for laptops. This could facilitate use by Members and officers of IT for reviewing agenda papers electronically, as an alternative to using printed agenda packs which can be large and expensive to produce (e.g. for planning committee).

However, review of the possibilities for using electronic agenda packs has shown that one of the barriers is the weight and lack of portability of the Council's standard laptops. Whilst laptops are suitable for most computing functions they are relatively expensive and too heavy to be truly portable. Use of tablets is better in both these respects; they are cheaper and much lighter / more portable.

Previous concerns over data security have also now been eliminated by our recent adoption of a secure email app (Good for Enterprise) and thin client technologies.

7.2 Proposal

In view of the developments outlined above, it is now possible to offer tablets to Members. It is proposed that the offer is made on a trial basis initially, in order to test their suitability as laptop replacements and to judge their effectiveness in reducing our reliance on paper agenda packs. The trial would run until the end of March 2013 at which time a report will be presented to the Deputy Leader on the outcomes of the trial.

The exact make and model of tablets to be trialled is not yet known – one of the aims of the trial will be to help us identify the most suitable tablet for RMBC. It is proposed, therefore, that a variety of tablet types are tried.

There would be no requirement for Members to return their RMBC laptop whilst they are trying a tablet device but should the trial lead to a wider deployment then the proposal would be that Members and officers must choose between a tablet or laptop – it will not be possible financially to provide both.

7.3 Security

Many Members and officers already access RMBC systems from their personal tablets and smartphones using the secure Good app. This is the same solution as we will use for this trial – the only difference being that the tablets will be RMBC owned and issued rather than belonging to the individual. As with employee owned devices the RMBC issued tablets will not connect to RMBC's corporate data network – instead they will use the public RMBC WiFi which is available in several RMBC

buildings. They will also be able to connect to other public WiFi networks and the user's own WiFi at home.

It should be noted that it is not currently possible for RMBC ICT to control all parts of a tablet device. This is not the case for RMBC laptops – because our laptops use Microsoft Windows and are integrated with our Active Directory we are able to tightly control how the laptop is used and the software installed. Tablet devices work in a way which means that the only parts of the tablet which can be centrally controlled are:

1. Any system within the Good for Enterprise container – this currently includes email, calendar, contacts, web browsing, web based RMBC applications, the RMBC Intranet.
2. Any system delivered through a thin client window (under the Thin Client model the applications are installed on servers in our data centre and no processing is done on the end user's device, this gives much greater flexibility and choice as to the variety of devices that we can enable access from).

Any RMBC data which resides within the Good app or the thin client window is protected against loss and is remotely removed in the event of a device being lost or stolen. All other parts of the tablet are uncontrolled. As with BYOD, this does not pose a data security risk as it is not permitted for data to be transferred out of the Good app or the thin client window to other areas of the tablet.

Because the tablets will be RMBC owned and in order to comply with the Council's Information Security Policy we will need to take steps to limit the possibility of the user using the tablet's own browser (outside of Good) to visit inappropriate websites. Similarly we will need to minimise the risk of the user installing inappropriate apps, such as games, from the App Store or Market Place. We will implement configuration changes before issuing the device which will restrict some of this functionality. There are no such concerns when an individual is using a device that they own as they are at liberty to install games and browse sites as they see fit. As part of the trial we will continue to review the best options for securing tablets in order that our data remains safe whilst not impacting usability for Members.

7.4 Usability Considerations

Whilst all tablets can use the Good app, it should be noted that not all tablets are suitable for thin client. This is because thin client technology can only be used properly from devices and operating systems that allow for the use of a mouse or pointer. Devices which are interacted with solely via 'touch and swipe' technology cannot be used to access thin client systems. In practice this means that android tablets *can* use thin client as they can be connected to a mouse but iPads *can't* use thin client as they do not allow for the use of a mouse. This is not to say that iPads are not suitable for use by Members as it seems likely that the Good app will provide all the functionality required by Members. The lack of thin client would be more of an issue for officers who need to use business systems which are delivered via thin client – this being the case it seems that Android or Microsoft devices may be more suitable than iPads for officers.

8. Finance

The adoption of tablet computing by RMBC will result in savings to the Council in two areas:

- **Reduced cost of hardware** – tablet devices are significantly cheaper than laptops. The exact savings will depend on the type of devices purchased, but an iPad 2 (for example) will cost the Council approximately £330 per device – a saving of £300 when compared with the cost of a standard RMBC laptop.
- **Reduced cost of printing** – RMBC currently spends approximately £150,000 per year in printing agendas and minutes for Member meetings. If some Members begin using electronic agenda packs we will be able to make a saving on print costs. The exact savings will depend upon the number of Members ceasing to request a printed agenda pack.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

If we do not include tablet devices as an option for Members and officers we will be unable to offer Members the technology they prefer, achieve the efficiency savings described above or deliver the Council's ICT Strategy.

Despite the fact that tablets are cheaper than laptops, there is a tendency for iPads (or equivalent) to be seen as frivolous and not as serious business tools. We have previously received FOI requests asking how many iPads the Council owns – there is a risk that there will be further FOI requests along these lines and that this will lead to unwanted press attention.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Policy and Performance issues are considered elsewhere in this report.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Deputy Leader Report – Bring Your Own Device (October 2012)
- RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015)
- Internal Audit Report (November 2010) – Access to RMBC email from Smartphones
- Internal Audit Report (July 2012) – Bring Your Own Device
- Internal Audit have been consulted on the security issues relating to RMBC owned tablet devices.

12. Contact Names:

Richard Copley, Corporate ICT Manager, Tel 54525
richard.copley@rotherham.gov.uk