

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

1.	Meeting:	Member Development Panel
2.	Date:	September 4th 2014
3.	Title:	Review of Members ICT Provision
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on the ways in which Members can use ICT equipment and software to assist them in their duties and thereby help Members to support Rotherham's citizens.

6. Recommendations

The Panel is asked to:

- **Note the technology currently available to Members.**
- **Suggest any changes/improvements that the Panel would wish to see implemented.**
- **Support the suggestion that a small group be set up to review and improve the e-casework system.**
- **Support the proposal to investigate the use of hybrid computing devices by Members.**
- **Comment on the suggestion that Orange Books are no longer printed.**
- **Support the recommendation for RMBC to continue exploring new and emerging options for mobile technology use for Members.**

7. Proposals and Details

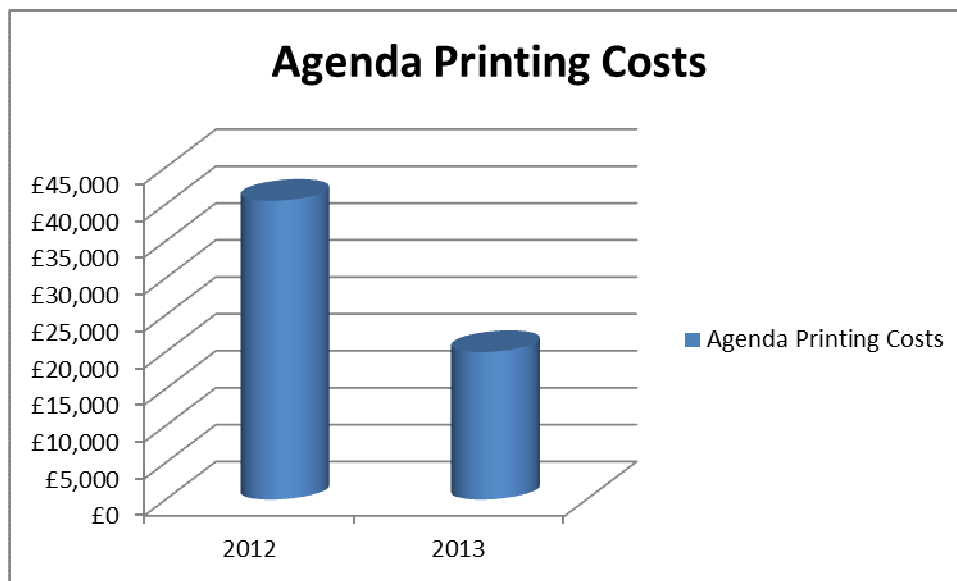
7.1 Background and Progress to Date

RMBC continually reviews the technology market place to identify devices and services that can support Elected Members in fulfilling their role. The RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015) includes the following goals:

- We will enable elected Members to gain access to, and use, modern technology.
- We will support the development of skilled, technologically confident elected Members through investing in learning, development and training.

RMBC now has a very 'tech-savvy' Elected Members who routinely use a range of technologies to help them in their work.

One of the motivations for supplying Members with tablets (such as iPads) and laptops was to reduce the amount that the council spends on printing agenda packs for Member meetings. The graph below shows that this initiative has had the desired effect, with the cost of printing agenda packs falling by more than half since iPads were introduced with a saving of more than £20,000.



The majority of RMBC's Members now routinely use electronic agenda packs but a number of Members are continuing with paper agendas.

In March 2014 RMBC's SLT and Cabinet accepted several recommendations to improve the technology offered to Members whilst make financial savings. These changes are outlined below along with a new proposal to trial hybrid computers with Members.

Connectivity

Previous practice was for some Members have RMBC funded broadband supplied to their home. This was an anachronistic practice dating to a period when many individuals did not have separate, personal, Internet access at home. Furthermore, not all Members use their RMBC broadband as it is restricted to connection from RMBC laptops and cannot be used wirelessly to be accessed, for example, by an iPad.

RMBC will be ceasing to supply broadband to Members but will allow existing contracts to reach their natural end date before provision is ceased.

Computing Devices

The current policy of supplying Members with either a laptop or a tablet computer (e.g. an iPad) has had a positive effect on reducing print costs. It is proving difficult, however, for some Members with iPads to relinquish their RMBC laptop (as is policy), because:

- iPads do not have an equivalent to Outlook's Personal Folders for the storage of historical emails.
- It is therefore difficult to manage emails and mailbox size on an iPad.
- Document storage and folder management is difficult on an iPad.
- iPads are less easy / comfortable to use than laptops and are not suitable for long periods of work.
- A laptop is needed for detailed report writing.
- There is no way to print from an iPad.

Discussions with Members have confirmed that iPads are a viable alternative to working with printed papers but that iPads do not yet have sufficient functionality to entirely replace laptops as a Members' sole computing device.

There are now devices on the market known as 'hybrid computers' which will fulfil the role of laptops and tablets and will remove the requirement to provide two devices to Members. Hybrid devices have been tested by officers and we now propose to seek volunteers among Members to test these new computers.

Furthermore, in order to make email management easier we have now given all Members a 2GB mailbox (this is 10 times larger than the current 200MB mailbox).

The Panel is asked to note that:

1. Whilst we trial the hybrid devices we will continue to offer Members a laptop or an iPad and that the policy should remain that Members must choose only one of these devices.

2. Members are reminded that RMBC provides computing facilities within the Town Hall party rooms for Member use and that these may offer a viable alternative to a RMBC issued laptop or iPad.
3. Members are encouraged to buy the RMBC issued iPad through reductions in the Member's allowance – the device would then become the property of the Member.

Printing

Whilst we are making good progress on reducing print costs through the use of digital documents there is still more that could be done. A few Members still take paper agenda packs and a small number of these Members have an RMBC laptop or iPad.

A proportion of the remaining print costs relate to printing the 'Orange Book' and 'White Book' for Member meetings. These reference books contain all the minutes submitted to Council for approval (White Book) plus Scrutiny Panel meeting minutes, information about Member seminars and other ad hoc meetings (Orange Book). The books are thrown away (recycled) immediately after the meeting. All this information is already available electronically.

In terms of desktop printing, some of our Members have a council issued printer at home. The provision of these devices is counter to our strategy of eliminating paper prints. Furthermore the council provides printing facilities for members in the Town Hall and other RMBC buildings.

The Panel is asked to note that:

1. RMBC no longer supplies printers for Members to use at home.
2. Agenda packs are not offered to iPad owners and that this be made a condition of an iPad being issued.

In addition the panel is asked to comment on the suggestion that Orange Books are no longer printed (SLT has already advised that the White Book must be retained in hard copy form).

Telephony

Some of RMBC's Members are issued with BlackBerrys. The council has recently taken the decision to cease using BlackBerrys and to consolidate mobile email requirements on the Good for Enterprise app. This means that BlackBerrys will no longer be offered to RMBC's councillors and any BlackBerrys still in circulation will be collected. The Good for Enterprise email app is popular with Members and will still be offered to Members for installation on their personal smartphone or iPad.

RMBC previously provided a landline for Members to use, at home, for Council business. This was a relatively expensive practice. RMBC can, however, provide mobile phones to Members at very low cost (£1.50 per month plus call costs). Since it is likely that the council would not wish to publish mobile numbers as the main contact number for a councillor (because of the high call charges that the citizen would incur) we can now create a VOIP extension number for each Member and divert this to a mobile or landline as requested. The council is charged for the cost of the forwarded calls from the VOIP number – but this is negligible in comparison to the cost of the landline rental (and calls from the landline).

The Panel is asked to note that:

1. RMBC continues to offer a standard mobile phone (non-smartphone) to Members. Where a Member needs access to data (e.g. for mobile email) then a smartphone is offered.
2. RMBC has ceased to offer landlines to Members and can instead create a VOIP extension to be diverted to the Member's phone.
3. RMBC has ceased to issue BlackBerrys to Members and we are collecting any BlackBerrys still in circulation.

eCasework

eCasework is a system that can be accessed flexibly from any computer, phone or tablet and allows Members to record issues and queries into one place, therefore providing a full audit trail of responses and actions.

The benefit of the system is that Members do not need to know specific contact names for particular cases; the job is logged and assigned to the appropriate Directorate surgery mailbox.

However, there has been increased usage of e-casework by newly elected members which has raised some question of inconsistent processes and interface with officers which needs to be addressed. It is therefore suggested that it may be beneficial to set up a small review group to discuss strengths/weaknesses of the system including any issues of not receiving timely responses from individual Directorate surgery mailboxes.

Support for development of technology skills

As referenced in the ICT Strategy, ICT skills development support is provided for Elected Members and this is referenced in the separate report detailing development activity during 2013/14.

Summary

The table below summarises the ICT which is currently offered to Members:

Item	Offered by RMBC to Members?
GOOD APP (on multiple devices)	✓
LAPTOP or iPad	✓
HYBRID COMPUTER (on trial)	✓
RMBC LANDLINE	✗
PRINTER	✗
RMBC BROADBAND	✗
STANDARD MOBILE PHONE	✓
eCASEWORK	✓
BLACKBERRY	✗
MONITOR (if a laptop has been issued)	✓
3G DONGLE	✗
DOCKING STATION	✗
HEADSET	✗
SMARTPHONE (where data is required)	✓
DESKTOP PC	✗
ORANGE BOOKS	TBD

Where a service is being ceased then this will not happen until the relevant contract reaches its natural end point.

7.3 Future Developments

Computing is a particularly fast moving field. It is recommended that RMBC's Corporate ICT department continue to monitor and test developments in this field with a view to taking advantage of the efficiencies and savings offered by emerging technologies where a clear business case exists to do so.

8. Finance

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 financial impacts of the rationalising Member ICT provision will vary depending on which options are taken how many Members choose to avail themselves of each

service. Further complexity is introduced when we consider that the various services currently used by Members will have varying contract end points and, therefore, varying trigger points from which savings can be realised.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

If we do not continue to provide appropriate technology 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.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Policy and Performance issues are considered elsewhere in this report.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- Deputy Leader Report – Tablet Computing for Members (March 2013)
- RMBC ICT Strategy (2011 to 2015)
- Procurement colleagues have been consulted in the production of this report.

12. Contact Names:

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

Debbie Pons, Principal Democratic Services Officer debbie.pons@rotherham.gov.uk