

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES – K.JONES

12 February 2015

SECTION A- MATTERS FOR DECISION

WARDS AFFECTED-ALL

'MODERN.GOV' AND MEMBERS IT PROGRESS UPDATE

Purpose of Report

- 1) To provide Members with an update in relation to the progress made with the installation and development of the new Software solution (Modern.Gov) which is assisting in modernising the Council's decision management processes.
- 2) To update Members in relation to progress made in exploring Members' IT support requirements since the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee.

Background.

In the last meeting, the Committee received a progress report in relation to the installation of the 'Modern.Gov' software package. Since that meeting the system has 'gone live' and work to continue to develop the use and functionality of the system has been ongoing with Members and Officers. In order to achieve maximum benefits from the system the Committee recognised that work should be undertaken to ensure Members had the right level of skill and support. Members of the Committee agreed to participate in a workshop with other Members to take this forward.

Progress

As agreed in the last meeting of the Committee, a workshop was held on Members' IT where issues were discussed with the Head of ICT and the Modern.Gov system was demonstrated.

Feedback from Members who attended was positive and the group committed to continuing to meet when necessary to progress the Member IT agenda.

An action arising from this group was to hold a Members' IT Seminar. This was done on December 1st 2014 and included a demonstration of equipment available to Members at the Committee Rooms in Port Talbot as well as the opportunity to sign up to additional IT Training.

Disappointingly, the Seminar was poorly attended (24 Members) with a large number of Members missing and only a very low percentage have attended any supplementary training (12 Members).

The Modern.Gov system went live on October 24th 2014. To assist Members through the transition process a Members IT 'Hub' has been set up in the Democratic Services Office.

A selection of equipment has been set up (such as iPads and laptops) and Members are encouraged to drop in to the office to have an induction to the Mod.Gov system. Democratic Services staff can also support Members with specific issues in relation to Modern.Gov such as accessing reports.

Since the Modern.Gov system has gone live the following changes will be apparent:

- New design and layout of the 'Your Council' webpages;
- The creation of committee 'packs';
- Auto pagination of papers resulting in clearer page numbering and the removal of coloured paper resulting in a significant cost saving; and
- More clarity in the titles of reports on the face of agendas referring to the subject of the report instead of being title as simply 'Report of the Head of...'

Thus far, those Members who have used the system have provided very positive feedback as well as constructive criticism and advice which has allowed for improvements and changes to be made to the system. This assistance has been invaluable and additional feedback is encouraged as the system continues to develop.

For those Members who have accessed the new system online the following functionality can now be observed:

- New Member Profile pages (which include linkable contact details, committee membership and where additional links to surgery information, annual reports etc. can be found.)
- Live interactive calendar of meetings which provides Council meeting information for that week/month/year and is updated instantly when any changes are made; and
- Online access to all meeting papers (current and retrospective)

The system has more functionality which is yet to be enabled but the next phase is likely to include:

- Publishing Members' apologies (following the Annual Meeting a new process of receiving apologies for meetings will be agreed to ensure that they are accurately captured in the system);

-Publishing Members' attendance. This function is currently disabled as the information is not currently accurate due to Modern.Gov only showing meeting information since its October 'go live' date. Following the Annual Meeting in May, Members' Attendance will be captured and recorded on the system and will be portrayed via the Member Profile Pages.

One of the next major steps in progressing the Modern.Gov system is the activation of the automatic email notifications which will enable Members to be emailed a link to the papers for relevant meetings as soon as they are available. This will allow papers to be viewed immediately rather than wait for delivery via the courier run. In advance of switching e mail notifications on, it is essential that all members can access the system confidently and competently.

The Democratic Services Committee are asked to support the introduction of email notifications from the beginning of the next Civic Year with each Member given responsibility for accessing the necessary support to operate the system over the interim period. Included in Appendix 1 is a draft letter to be circulated to all Members informing them of the changes for the Committee's comments and endorsement.

It would be of assistance if the Committee could provide any further suggestions to maximise the engagement of Members on this project.

Recommendation

- 1) That Members of the Democratic Services Committee note the progress made in the installation and development of the Modern.Gov decision management software.
- 2) That Members of the Democratic Services Committee agree and endorse the proposal to switch on email notifications.
- 3) The Members of the Democratic Services Committee endorse the content of the letter attached at Appendix 1 to be circulated to Members.
- 4) In order to fully consider how the additional functionality of Modern.Gov can be implemented to suit Members needs it is recommended that Members of the Democratic Services Committee formalise the establishment of a Member Reference Group of representative and interested members so that the next phase of the systems implementation can be planned in accordance with Members' needs.

List of Background Papers

Modern.Gov – Local Government Decision Management Software Solution
<http://www.modern.gov.co.uk>

Wards Affected

All

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Appendix 1

Dear Member,

MODERNISING DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS – MODERN.GOV

‘ENABLING EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERS.’

You will remember that I recently write to you informing you of the transition within the Democratic Services Team onto a new committee management software system which ‘went live’ in October 2014.

I provided you with some background to the new system, which is known as ‘Modern.Gov’ which offers the Authority a more efficient way to collate, prepare and publish all types of committee agendas, reports and minutes as well as papers for other meetings.

In addition, I informed you that the system will provide a robust foundation to allow, in due course, Members to more easily access and manage their diary and weekly Council papers utilising their current PC, laptop or iPad in ways which currently are not possible.

The introduction of the Modern.Gov system was a key part of the ongoing commitment to modernise and improve democratic arrangements of the authority as was laid out in the 2 July 2014, Council Report of the Head of Corporate Strategy and Democratic Services.

As part of the transition to the new system you may have already started to notice some changes, these have included:

- A new look to the Council and Democracy webpages
- A new and improved ‘search’ functionality for documents
- Improved Member Profile Pages with links to Member information such as Annual Reports and surgery details
- An online interactive Calendar of meetings
- Report Cover Agendas and Agenda Indexes being replaced with a more straightforward ‘All-In-One’ Agenda template
- Inclusion of consecutive Page Numbering on all Agendas, Reports & Minutes

- Printing all Council Documents on White Paper (as opposed to headed and coloured paper) allowing for significant stationery cost savings

The next step in allowing us to increase the functionality of the system is to switch on automatic email notifications, which will involve Members of Committees receiving automatic email notifications when the papers for their relevant Committees are ready and will include an email link to all your papers which will be bundled into a single comprehensive electronic document pack. This will allow Members to access their papers as soon as they are published, rather than having to wait to receive them in their courier mail run on Fridays

In order to make the most of this new and extremely useful function it is imperative that Members have full confidence and ability in using email and internet functions. If you feel you would benefit from training to allow you to better understand email and internet please don't hesitate to get in touch with my colleague Stacy Sullivan in the Democratic Services Team (s.sullivan@npt.gov.uk 01639 763194) who will be more than happy to arrange training for you.

Similarly, while we are going through a period of change and development with new digital services becoming available to you as Members, we have set up a 'Members Hub' in the Democratic Services Office whereby a range of IT equipment that is available to you as Members has been set up on a work station so that you can drop in at any time and be given 1-1 advice from a member of the team who can talk through any issues you may have with the new system and accessing reports on the equipment that you are comfortable and familiar with and I would urge you to take up this offer if you feel it would assist you in any way whilst you get to grips with the new system.

I must emphasise that we will still continue to provide Members with all papers they currently receive in hard copy format via the courier run service. In due course, once the new system is properly established we will, following approval, begin to approach Members to ask if they wish to continue to receive their papers in hard copy format or would prefer to 'opt out' and only receive their papers electronically. In essence, the choice will remain yours as to how you would like to receive your Council papers.

I will of course keep you informed of progress in relation to the new system, in the meantime if you have any specific questions regarding 'Modern.Gov' or any other queries or concerns you may have around the modernising of the Council's democratic arrangements please do not hesitate to contact me or anyone in the team.

Yours faithfully,
Rhys George
(Electoral and Democratic Services Manager)