Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Democratic Services Committee
7th June 2021

Report of the Chair of Members IT Reference Group

Matter for information

Wards Affected: All

Members IT Reference Group Update Report

Purpose of the Report:

To provide the Members of the Democratic Services Committee with an update on the work of the Members IT reference Group.

Executive Summary:

Following a decision from the Democratic Services Committee, the Members IT Reference Group was re-established and held their first meeting on 13 December 2018. This meeting enabled the group to future plan the focus for the group and to plan their forward work programme for the forthcoming year, as well as highlighting the common challenges faced with using ICT.

- During the Covid pandemic Council meetings have been facilitated remotely, using Microsoft Teams, which is a component of our Office 365 licencing.

- All members have access to Teams on their iPads and laptops. Headsets have been provided for those that needed one.

- The use of Teams has highlighted the absence of Welsh translation during remote meetings. Teams currently does not support simultaneous translation of any language. Alternative solutions were researched and the lead taken from the WLGA in adopting Zoom following a showcase run by the Senedd IT. The council has now bought enough Zoom licencing to cover all Members including Senior leadership & Officers. The next phase of work will be to pilot its usage within the Members IT reference group. With the aim of using it for certain Council meetings, whilst Teams remains the main communication tool for the majority of Council business.

- Scoping work has begun on improving the Chamber and Committees rooms Video conferencing facilities with the focus on facilitating hybrid meetings and better remote public participation.

- With remote working came the reliance upon Members home broadband connectivity. No specific issues have been identified with members wireless network connectivity but further work will be undertaken in the year to confirm. Some members do suffer from limited broadband offerings and ISP vendors have been asked to identify potential solutions.

- To assist in the evaluation of home broadband members laptops have been updated to the latest Windows version and migrated onto the latest iteration of the Council secure and seamless network.

- iPads have been migrated to a Microsoft Mobile Device Manager called inTune – leaving Blackberry UEM. This migration was managed and supported by the Democratic

Services team and did highlight a demand for further in depth support for certain Members. The migration process also included upgrading the IOS to the latest version, thereby ensuring security and functionality for the latest apps.

- ModGov has been upgraded by the company, bringing it in line with security and functionality requirements. Exploration of the participation modules to enable the public to better engage with the democratic processes and help shape council business is being undertaken by Democratic services.

- Training requirements that have been identified were in the use of Teams and in future Zoom.

Background:

- The principal device for members is the Apple IPAD which provides the richest experience for ModGov which underpins the council's committee governance and meeting solution. Both iPad operating system and mobile management have been updated, enabling a secure and user friendly tool for efficient meetings.

- The need for members to be able to participate in remote meetings required Microsoft Teams. And the requirement for simultaneous Welsh translation will mean adopting the Zoom platform for certain meetings.

- A survey of the ICT environment was commissioned to identify any issues which would impair ability of member to fulfil their democratic duties. A layered approach has been adopted which includes desk checks of the environment health checks on the equipment and calls to Members to

check on potential issues. The survey will continue as an operational task carried out by Members Support.

Financial Impacts:

There are no significant financial impacts. Any incremental change to the provided equipment will be funded from the existing budgets

Integrated Impact Assessment:

Report is for information only.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

There are no implications.

Workforce Impacts:

There are no implications.

Legal Impacts:

There are no implications.

Risk Management Impacts:

There are no significant impacts.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item

Recommendations:

That members note the update on the Work of the Members IT Reference Group

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To provide Members with an update on the work that the Members IT Reference Group.

Appendices:

- None

List of Background Papers:

- None

Contact

Officer Contact:

Mr H Jenkins, Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Tel:01639 763284 e-mail: h.jenkins@npt.gov.uk

Mr D Giles, ICT Service Manager
Tel: 01639 686258 e-mail: d.b.giles@npt.gov.uk

Mr S Blewett , Systems Manager
Tel: 01639 686206 e-mail s.blewett@npt.gov.uk