

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

13 December 2021

Joint Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services – Craig Griffiths & Chief Digital Officer- Chris Owen.

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected:

All Wards

Members' ICT Scheme and Internet Usage Policy

Purpose of the Report

To seek Member approval for the amended Members ICT Scheme and Internet Usage Policy.

Background

The original Members ICT Policy (including Internet Usage Policy) was revised by Members in 2017 to coincide with the introduction and transition onto the new Committee Document Management System, Modern.Gov and in preparation for the induction of new members in 2017.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and in order to facilitate Council decision making and scrutiny since March 2020, all Council meetings have been held remotely via Microsoft TEAMS and all Council business has remained heavily reliant on the use of digital and ICT systems.

It is important to note that changes in legislation will take place over the coming year in respect of Council meetings. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 will make new arrangements for meetings that will come into effect in May 2022. These arrangements include (amongst others):

- (a) The requirement for principal councils to make, and publish, arrangements that ensure that the proceedings of certain types of council meeting are broadcast electronically in a way that allows members of the public, not in attendance, to see and hear proceedings. The proceedings must be broadcast live (subject to any exceptions that may be specified in regulations) and they must be available electronically after the meeting for a period specified in regulations
- (b) Local Authorities must make arrangements that ensure their meetings can take place in a manner which enables persons who are not in the same place to attend the meeting. The authority must publish these arrangements, if the arrangements are revised or replaced the new arrangements must also be published. This requirement though does not however require meetings to be held in a certain format. Whether they are held fully virtually, partially virtually – whereby some participants are in the same physical location whilst others join the meeting virtually – or as physical meetings will be a matter for those responsible for arranging the meetings

In preparation for the induction of Elected Members following the Local Government Elections, scheduled to take place on 6 May 2022 the Members ICT Policy has been amended (as attached at Appendix 1).

Members of the Democratic Services Committee are asked to review and approve the proposed scheme to ensure that it reflects the future needs Elected Members and maximises the use of digital communication tools in line with legislation and the Council's Digital by Choice strategy.

Financial Impact

The cost of providing Members equipment will be funded via Member ICT reserves.

Integrated Impact Assessment

A screening assessment has been undertaken but a full Impact Assessment is not warranted.

Workforce Impacts

The workforce impacts of implementing the Members ICT Scheme will be met by the existing resources in the Digital Services and Democratic Services Teams.

Legal Powers

The Local Government Measure 2011 places a responsibility on the Head of Democratic Services to ensure that there is sufficient resource in place to support Members in carrying out their roles.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/contents>

[Local Government and Elections \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)

Risk Management

Failure to ensure a suitable ICT Policy is in place may have a detrimental effect on the ability of members elected in May 2022 to undertake their functions appropriately and to meet new legislative obligations for council meetings.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation under the Constitution.

Recommendations

That members approve the amended Members ICT Policy (including Internet Usage Policy) and commend the same to Council for ratification.

Reason for Proposed Decision

To ensure that there is sufficient resource in place to support Members in carrying out their roles in readiness for the 2022 Local Government Elections.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Draft Members ICT Scheme, Including Internet Usage Policy.

List of Background Papers

None

Officer Contacts

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