

Members' Information and Communication Technology

February 2006

A review by the Overview Scrutiny Committee



Review of Members' Information and Communication Technology

September 2006

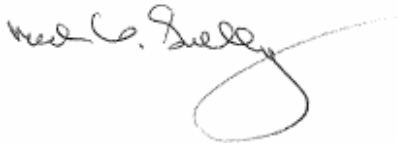
Forward

The effective use of Information Technology (IT) is increasingly being recognised as essential to local authority councillors in the performance of their duties and to the development of a widely accessible knowledge database.

Not only does communication - both internally within the council and externally with the electorate - become far quicker but also presents the opportunity to reduce the mountain of paper traditionally associated with councils such as Gravesham, which is entirely desirable for both economic and environmental reasons.

Striking the correct balance between the need to provide councillors with the requisite IT equipment and knowledge and the subsequent cost to the council tax payer is a challenge facing all councils. The efficiency savings, as part of this financial equation, should not be underestimated. The recommendations contained in this report seek to offer a way forward to achieving this balance.

The provision of IT equipment and systems places a very real responsibility on the part of the councillors themselves to grasp the opportunities afforded by this new technology and I on behalf of the Overview Scrutiny Committee hope that this will be recognised and acted upon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Snelling', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Councillor Mike Snelling

Chair of Overview Scrutiny Committee

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| <p>1. Executive summary</p> <p>1.1 The Overview Scrutiny Committee agreed to appoint a task group to undertake a review of Members Information and Communication Technology.</p> <p>1.2 The task group was chaired by Councillor Mike Snelling, the other four members being Councillors Jones, Rosemary Leadley, Newell and Singh. Councillor Turner who has extensive knowledge of IT systems advised the task group on technical issues and sat in on some of the evidence gathering sessions.</p> <p>1.3 The terms of reference for the review were:-</p> <p>To recommend a way forward for members' information services for the future, including provision of computer equipment, or allowance to purchase such, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consulting with all members as to their needs, expectations and experiences of information technology; • considering the impact the new committee management system will have on how members receive and access information; • investigating the implementation of the council's e-government strategy in respect of members services including how value for money can be achieved; • considering best practice in other local authorities; • using the evidence gathered from the review to make recommendations to the Cabinet. | <p>1.4 Recommendations to cabinet are</p> <p>1.4.1 IT equipment for members to be leased rather than purchased. Members to be offered a choice of a PC with 19ins flat panel monitor or a laptop. Both choices to include a basic black and white laser printer. The lease to be for 4 years to coincide with the electoral cycle.</p> <p>1.4.2 Every member to have a broadband connection paid for by the council but with a nominal contribution of £5 per month by each member for personal use. Existing connections, that members have already installed on their own behalf, could be utilised provided that they can be made secure to protect the authorities IT system.</p> <p>1.4.3 Provide a support service to members during office hours. The preferred option would be for this service to be provided in house. However constraints on the IT department may make it necessary to out source provision of this support service.</p> <p>1.4.4 A notional allowance, suggested level to be £200p.a., to be made available to each member. This money will be held by the council and requests for consumables (paper, printer cartridges etc) will be offset against an individual member's allowance.</p> <p>1.4.5 Members use of the council supplied computer equipment and network should be covered by a protocol agreed with the standards committee</p> <p>1.4.6 Members to be provided with training on the use of Word, Excel, search engines, the internet, e-mail and Modern.gov.</p> |
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<p>1.4.7 Members to be offered the opportunity to develop their own personal websites as part of the Modern.gov committee management system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure we are delivering excellent service across the council • Ensure that we become in CPA terms an 'Excellent council'
<p>1.5 The context in which this review was undertaken was the impending introduction of Modern.gov which is a document and committee meeting management system and the needs and expectations of both members and the council in respect of the e-government agenda.</p>	<p>2.3 The strategy does not specifically mention services to Members. The only reference to members is in a summary of the High Level Improvement Plan (HILP) which lists 'Action no 13 - To include developing Members IT skills as required especially their interface with Committee Team and the use of IT in meetings.'</p>
<p>1.6 Evidence gathering</p> <p>Evidence gathering sessions were held with the Head of Democratic Services, the Head of IT Services, the leader of the council, two non executive members and representatives of Newham Council.</p> <p>A questionnaire was sent to all members seeking their views on IT equipment and services.</p> <p>A survey of other local authorities in the south east was also carried out to determine what level of IT services they supplied to their members.</p>	<p>2.4 The council has also published 'Implementing Electronic Government Return 2005 Mid Term (IEG4.5) (Appendix three)</p> <p>Section one of this document lists 'Priority Outcomes'</p> <p>Included in this list is - R6 'Providing every councillor with the option to have an easy-to-manage set of public web pages (for community leadership purposes) that is either maintained for them, or that they can maintain themselves.'</p>
<p>2 Background</p>	<p>2.5 Some members recently took part in a personal development project. The final report highlighted a number of issues relating to IT and more general communication.</p>
<p>2.1 In 2005 Gravesham Borough Council produced an ICT strategy to run for two years.</p>	<p>The report concluded that Members were keen to develop a greater awareness of the e-government agenda and how it had a key role in supporting democratic renewal. They also wished to have individual one to one coaching or in very small groups (maximum four per group) to ensure that their development needs were met.</p>
<p>2.2 The strategy is centred round service delivery and the expansion of the availability of information to meet the needs of all the community and sets out three main aims.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure we successfully complete our e-government programme 	

	<p>The report suggested that members should be encouraged to move towards accreditation of IT skills through access to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL).</p>	<p>member's printers is such that only a few pages can be printed as they are extremely slow.</p>
	<p>Other issues referred to in the report were supporting effective casework, information management and member's personal designated web pages.</p>	<p>2.9 The council has no policy on broadband. Some members have had a broadband connection installed on their own behalf. Those members who do not have broadband find that down loading information from the council can tie up their phone line for some considerable time with large files being impossible to receive.</p>
	<p>The report suggested ways in which these issues could be addressed.</p>	<p>2.10 Identified options for the provision of equipment and services to members</p>
2.6	<p>The council is installing Modern.gov which is a document and committee management software system. This will provide solutions for some of the issues raised in paras 2.4 and 2.5 above. The system is expected to go live in September 2006.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of hardware Lease or purchase • Hardware PC/laptop/tablet 19ins flat panel monitor black and white laser printer
2.7	<p>Gravesham Borough Council currently provides members with laptops, which are out dated, slow and due for replacement and very basic, very slow black and white printers. Some members are more at home with the technology than others. There has been limited take up of the training offered by the IT department. The lack of availability of IT staff has limited the support that can be provided to members to solve individual problems. Indeed laptops were the preferred option because they could be brought into the council offices for attention as it was impossible for staff to carry out home visits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional monetary allowance for purchase of:- PC/ laptop/tablet/printer Minimum specification to enable members to purchase appropriate hardware NB. The tax implications for members of this option were recognised. • Provision of broadband Essential for effective use of Modern.gov. • Provision of support services during and outside office hours in house/contracted out IT department not in a position to provide sufficient support due to staff constraints.
2.8	<p>The council is trying to reduce the amount of hard copy produced and to have most printing done by reprographics to minimise costs. However there are times when members need to download and print information sent to them electronically. The capacity of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowance for consumables either additional monetary allowance or notional, budget held by the council with no tax implications.

3	Outcome of review	directed their members through their existing IT helpdesks for council officers.
3.1	Survey of neighbouring and peer local authority IT provision.	Canterbury City Council provide out of hours technical support and Maidstone Borough Council provide a members support officer.
3.1.1	Hardware provided to members.	
	It appears to be a universal trend for the councils questioned to supply their members with a laptop/PC, printer and print cartridges. In addition to this provision South Bedfordshire District Council provides an allowance for those members that use their own equipment. Shepway Borough Council only provide a £1500 loan available for the purchase of equipment which has to be repaid during the members term of office. Bedford Borough Council resist providing members with new IT hardware in favour of simply renewing existing equipment when necessary.	3.1.4
3.1.2	Training	Broadband City Council, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Dover District Council, Maidstone Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council (50% of those questioned) all provide members with a broadband connection or allowance towards installation of such a connection. South Bedfordshire only install a broadband connection to members of their executive. The complete survey results are reproduced at appendix one
	All of the responses indicated that IT training is available for all members of councils surveyed. Kent County Council vary from the rest as they utilise adult education classes and staff to provide one - to - one instruction where requested. Training is seemingly available on demand although specific training courses are deemed less successful and poorly attended by members. Similarly, they only provide training when new hardware is installed or upgraded. They also relayed their desire to offer members the opportunity to gain the ECDL qualification.	3.2
3.1.3	Technical support	Members questionnaire Of the 44 members 35 responded to the questionnaire including one returned with no questions answered. This is a response rate of 79.5% Of those members who responded <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 used their own computer and 19 the council supplied laptop. (some use both) • 21 used their computer/council laptop every day but 3 never used a computer • 18 members have a broadband connection (at their own expense) • 26 downloaded and printed information accessed through their computer/laptop
	Technical support is not provided by Shepway Borough Council whereas the remaining councils questioned,	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 thought that they got a good response from the IT department, 15 thought this support satisfactory. • All the data from the survey including a copy of the questionnaire and the responses from the open questions is reproduced at appendix two 	
3.3	<p>Interview with Councillor John Burden leader of the council.</p> <p>The leader considered that the minimum level of IT equipment members should have was: A PC with 19" screen, a broadband connection paid for as part of a member's IT allowance and a black and white laser printer.</p> <p>He felt that as a minimum members should have a working knowledge of Word, Excel, the internet, search engines, e-mails and Microsoft outlook.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A broadband connection should be provided for each councillor paid for by the council. (Recommendation 1.4.2). 	<p>Robin Daly, Head of IT Services thought that it was essential that all members should have a broadband connection in their home paid for by the council. He favoured a system whereby members were given an allowance for the purchase of equipment and consumables preferably through a scheme that offered a support network as staff constraints in the IT department meant that not all problems raised by members could be dealt with immediately.</p> <p>He went on to say that all members should be able to use a search engine, access council networks, write a letter (using downloadable templates) and use e-mail. Training should be undertaken by all members to reach this minimum standard.</p> <p>Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern.gov will dramatically reduce the amount of printed matter circulated to councillors. • All members should have a broadband connection. (Recommendation 1.4.2). • An externally source support network should be provided for members possibly as part of any equipment leasing plan. (Recommendation 1.4.3). • Member training (Recommendation 1.4.6).
3.4	<p>Interview with Shirley Whatmough, Head of Democratic Services and Robin Daly, Head of IT Services</p> <p>Mrs Whatmough gave a brief overview of Modern.gov. The system is web based and will manage the processes of all committee meetings from assisting with the compiling and publishing of agendas to the creation of forward plans. The system has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of printed hardcopy.</p>	
		<p>3.5 Interview with non executive members.</p> <p>Councillor Loughlin said that he had his own PC as well as the council supplied laptop which he found to be more convenient as he could use it in many different locations. He had a</p>

broadband connection at his own expense and had purchased his own printer and fax machine. However he was reluctant to print a document of more than a couple of pages as the printer was only a small one.

He thought that broadband should be looked at as a necessity for all members to access the GBC network.

He felt that he preferred the current system of the council supplying equipment to members rather than being given an allowance to purchase their own.

He also considered that any contract to supply equipment should include a next day servicing agreement which would reduce the load on the council's IT department.

Councillor McGarrity used the council laptop but it had been returned several times to have faults rectified.. The main packages she uses are Word, Excel and Outlook. Councillor McGarrity rarely uses the internet and has never looked at the GBC website mainly due to lack of training.

Conclusions:

- **Broadband connection for all members. (Recommendation 1.4.2)**
- **The provision of equipment rather than an allowance. Lease to include provision of next day support. (Recommendation 1.4.1 and 1.4.3).**
- **More hands on training. (Recommendation 1.4.6).**

3.6 Visit to Newham

Members of Newham Council are given a computer and printer by the council. Members can choose either a laptop, desktop or tablet from a comprehensive list. This list also has a choice of peripherals.

This equipment is leased through an agreement with HP and Microsoft.

The council also supplies all members with a broadband connection. The council's preferred Internet Service Provider (ISP) is BT. Members can use any existing broadband connection they may have but the council may have to increase security on these ISPs to protect their network.

Members have a £500 per year notional allowance for consumables and other items. This money is held by the council and requests by members for paper, ink cartridges etc are bought by the council and deducted from the budget so there are no tax implications.

Members also pay £5 per month for personal use of their broadband connection.

Newham have been users of Modern.gov for a number of years and had run a pilot for member websites. They reported that those that took up the opportunity took to it very well. However, they have understandably introduced a prescriptive protocol that limits what members can put on their websites. They cannot, for example, be used for political purposes.

Conclusions:

- **Notional allowance, held by the council, for each member for consumables. (Recommendation 1.4.4).**

- **Nominal sum charged to each councillor for personal use of broadband. (Recommendation 1.4.2).**
- **Protocol for use of system. (Recommendation 1.4.5).**

Annual costs for provision or £200 per annum notional allowance for all 44 members = £8,800. It is reasonable to surmise that the actual take up cost will be considerably lower.

3.7 Member websites

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (now renamed the Department for Communities and Local Government) has identified that a key goal of the e-government improvement agenda is democratic renewal. A vital part of this process is helping councillors to improve their ability to use technology.

Modern.gov offers “members’ self-managed personal websites – all members can now have their own personal website at no extra cost to the council. The web sites are very simple to create and update and will greatly improve members visibility to the general public”.

Conclusion:

- **Member websites can greatly improve member’s visibility to the general public. (Recommendation 1.4.7).**

4. Costs for equipment provision

Enquiries were made to the councils IT equipment supplier who advised that a four year lease for:

- 44 PCs + 19” flat screen monitor + laser printer = £46,274.03
- 44 laptops + laser printer = £64,786.68

NB. Tablets are currently not available from our supplier.

Appendix 1

Evidence Gathering

Review: Members ICT

Date: 22 March 2006

Present: Cllrs Snelling
Jones
Leadley
Newell

Interviewees: Shirley Whatmough, Head of Democratic Services
Robin Daly, Head of IT Services

Mrs Whatmough gave an overview of Modern.gov which is a computer based document management system.

The system will go live in May.

The system is web based and will manage the processes of all committee meetings from assisting with the compiling and publishing of agendas to the creation of forward plans. The system can be password protected to control access where necessary and has the potential to dramatically reduce the amount of printed hardcopy. Hard copy will obviously be available for those who have difficulty with computers but, as members get more experience, they will be able to access an increasing number of the facilities that Modern.gov offers.

The system has the ability to provide members with self managed personal websites which will greatly improve member's visibility to the general public. There will be a database of members and the public will be able to search for their ward councillor by simply typing in their post code. Ultimately paper less meetings should be able to be held. It is unlikely that this level will ever be reached as reading vast amounts of text off a screen is not easy.

Robin Daly added that the system had been purchased through e-government funding and with the current updating of core systems being carried out, as part of the 'accommodating excellence' refurbishment, would be of great benefit to members.

Robin was asked what his view was on what members should have for the next 5 years. He said that Gravesham was one of the first authorities to issue its members with laptops but in the future he thought that it was essential that all members should have a broadband connection in their home paid for by the council. He also felt that 3G services which operated through the mobile phone network, whilst not as fast as broadband but faster than dial up, offered benefits in the remote access by members to the council's network.

There had been some issues with system security that prevented members from loading additional software onto their laptops however with the upgrading of the core systems this was becoming less of a problem.

He favoured a system whereby members were given an allowance for the purchase of equipment and consumables preferably through a scheme that offered a support network as staff constraints in the IT department meant that not all problems raised by members could be dealt with immediately. He added that were some sort of allowance regime introduced for the purchase of equipment by members it might be appropriate for the IT department to issue some specifications and guidelines to help members choose appropriate PC/laptops and accessories.

He went on to say that all members should be able to use a search engine, access council networks, write a letter (using downloadable templates) and use e-mail. Training should be undertaken by all members to reach this minimum standard.

Evidence Gathering

Review: Members ICT

Date: 23 March 2006

Present Cllrs Snelling
Jones
Newell

Interviewee Councillor Burden

Councillor Burden said that the authority was aiming to launch a Home Computing Initiative whereby employees could lease PCs on a 3 year contract through a 'piggy-back' arrangement with KCC and other local authorities. The deductions were to be taken via the payroll and no national insurance was to be paid on the contributions. He thought that it might be possible to extend this scheme to include members. (Unfortunately in the March 2006 budget the scheme was scrapped!)

The leader considered that the minimum level of IT equipment members should have was:

A PC with 19" screen, a broadband connection paid for as part of a member's IT allowance and a black and white laser printer.

Do you envisage laptops with 3G cards being used to remotely access the network from all parts of the borough?

The downside of this is the difficulty in reading off the screen. Would I do it? No

How do you see Modern.gov working?

I suspect that members will become better informed and it will be of great benefit to the council. It will mean a dramatic reduction in the amount of hardcopy agendas and reports being sent out.

What basic IT skills do you think members should have?

As a minimum I would expect a working knowledge of Word and Excel, the internet and search engines, e-mails and Microsoft outlook.

Cllr Burden saw the majority of printing being done at the civic centre as it was much cheaper. However, stationery and other consumables would be part of the members allowance but once it had been used up they would need to make their own arrangements.

He envisaged public access planning files being available on the internet but would argue against officer files being accessible to the public.

He thought that training for both members and officers should be carried out in-house.

Do you see the need for lead members to have any different equipment?

Possibly more and better equipment something like a Blackberry

Evidence gathering

Review: Members ICT

Date: 24 April 2006

Present Cllrs: Snelling
Leadley
Jones
Newell
Turner

In Attendance

Doug Finch

Interviewees

Clls Loughlin
McGarrity

This evidence gathering session invited two 'backbench' councillors to share their experiences of IT with the task group.

Councillor Loughlin said that he had his own PC as well as the council supplied laptop which he found to be more convenient as he could use it in many different locations. He had a broadband connection at his own expense and had purchased his own printer and fax machine. However he was reluctant to print a document of more than a couple of pages as the printer was only a small one.

He thought that broadband should be looked at as a necessity for all members to access the GBC network, to carry out their own internet based research and to make the best use of the information available to them.

He felt that he preferred the current system of the council supplying equipment to members being given an allowance to purchase their own. Any such change would need to be examined very carefully particularly from a tax point of view. He also considered that any contract to supply equipment should include a next day servicing agreement which would reduce the load on the council's IT department.

Councillor Loughlin was asked what packages he used and whether he backed up his files regularly. He replied that he used Word, Outlook and Explorer and as to backing up his files he said he would if he could but had never been shown how. This also applied to the updating of firewalls and other system protection devices.

There is a trend in local government towards members having their own website a facility that Modern.gov, the new document management system that the council has purchased, offers. Councillor Loughlin was asked what he felt about this. He said that he had mixed feelings about it but appreciated that this was probably the way to go to enhance engagement with the local community.

Councillor McGarrity used the council laptop but it had been returned several times to have faults rectified. With some training and support from her son she is able to use her laptop with a separate keyboard and monitor which she finds much easier. The main packages she uses are Word, Excel and Outlook. Councillor McGarrity said that she rarely uses the internet and has never looked at the GBC website. Her reluctance to use the internet was mainly through a lack of training. She went on to say that she would prefer an allowance for purchasing equipment with an element for consumables but agreed that some form of contract that offered home visits to sort out problems would be of tremendous benefit. She concluded by saying that there needed to be more hands on training not just learning from manuals

The point was raised about installing additional software onto council supplied laptops. (e.g. installing a different printer driver). This had been a problem because members had been locked out of the administration rights for loading software which meant that everything had to be done and controlled by the IT department. Things were slightly easier now.

A survey of near neighbour local authorities revealed that some of them had dedicated IT support for members. The task group thought this an ideal situation but appreciated that this would be costly for a small authority like Gravesham.

There was a belief that new councillors coming onto the council in the future would be more IT literate

Evidence gathering

Review: Members ICT

Venue: Newham Town Hall
Tuesday 16 May 2006

Present Cllrs Snelling
Jones

In Attendance

Doug Finch

Interviewees

Debbie Forde – Head of member Services
Councillor Christine Bowden – Deputy Mayor
Tajinder Aujla - IT Department

Members of Newham Council are given a computer and printer by the council. Members can choose either a laptop, desktop or tablet from a comprehensive list. This list also has a choice of peripherals.

This equipment is leased through an agreement with HP and Microsoft. Hardware is updated every 4 years.

Under this arrangement the PC/Laptop is returned to the council but the other items can be purchased by members at a nominal cost.

The council also supplies all members with a broadband connection. The council's preferred ISP is BT. Members can use any existing broadband connection they may have but the council may have to increase security on these ISPs to protect their network.

Members have a £500 per year allowance for consumables and other items. This money is held by the council and requests by members for paper, ink cartridges etc are offset against their allowance.

Members also pay £5 per month for personal use of their PC and broadband connection. They maintain separate personal and political e-mail addresses as the freedom of information act and data protection act can cause problems.

Members buy support from the IT department. This support amounts to one dedicated post. Home visits are carried out but more recently it has been possible to access members systems from the centre to sort out individual problems.

It is hoped to introduce on line training using a similar process.

Most council committee business is carried out via e-mail apart from the statutory requirements. Planning agendas are delivered as are hard copies of agendas to committee members. Non-members are sent a link to enable them to access the agenda electronically. The fact that the

town hall is a listed building has severe limitations on some IT issues. One example is the implementation of meetings where members look at agendas on their laptops.

How have members taken to personal websites?

We piloted this and those that took up the opportunity took to it very well. However, we have introduced a pretty prescriptive protocol that limits what members can put on their websites. They cannot be used for political purposes.

Appendix 2

A task group set up by the Overview Scrutiny Committee is carrying out a review of Members Information Services.

A major element of this review is to seek member's views and experiences of the current provision of information services and what might be done now and in the future to improve the exchange of information through the introduction of new technologies and systems. The task group welcome your input and would appreciate you taking a few minutes to answer this questionnaire.

Name.....

- Q1 Do you use your own computer or the council supplied laptop?**
your own computer 61.8%
council supplied laptop 55.9%
neither..... 8.8%
- Q2 Please give your reasons for your answer to Q1.**
 82.4%
- Q3 How often do you use your computer/council laptop**
every day 61.8%
once or twice a week 14.7%
less than once a month 11.8%
never..... 8.8%
- Q4 Would you use your computer/council laptop more if..?(please tick all that apply)**
There was regular training to refresh your knowledge 35.3%
You could get problems resolved or questions answered more quickly..... 32.4%
You could access more Council information through the internet and intranet 38.2%
You had a broadband connection at home..... 38.2%
You had the ability to load your own software 26.5%
- Q5 Do you have a broadband connection at home?**
yes 50.0%
no..... 44.1%
- Q6 If you do not have a broadband connection at home do you experience difficulties in downloading files sent from GBC**
yes..... 35.3%
no 26.5%
- Q7 Do you download and print the information you access through your computer/council laptop?**
yes 76.5%
no..... 14.7%
- Q8 Is your ability to print information from your computer/council laptop restricted by any of the following (please tick all that apply)**
speed of printer 38.2%
supply of paper 20.6%
supply of print cartridges 26.5%
other 14.7%
please specify 26.5%
- Q9 Do you think that?**
You should get an allowance for equipment/supplies 58.8%
The Council should provide everything on an as and when basis..... 26.5%
- Q10 How would you rate the support you get from the IT department?**
Good..... 32.4%
Satisfactory 44.1%
Poor..... 5.9%
- Q11 Is there anything else that could be supplied or a service delivered by GBC IT department that could assist you in fulfilling your council duties?**
 52.9%

Please give your reasons for your answer to the question “do you use your own computer or the council supplied laptop” choices were:-

Your own computer
Council supplied laptop
Neither

1. council have supplied laptop. I use it for council and personal use. I have one at work
2. own at home. The council laptop is used here as base unit for my PC
4. the laptop is rubbish. It still does not allow me access to the server
5. this is the only computer I have, if it goes wrong I can transport it easily to the IT dept.
6. more convenient newer software service back up to solve problems
7. council e mails redirected to personal e mail account so council laptop redundant
8. why buy one if you are given one. Use own to back up files
9. security, reliability, broadband
10. better quality and already in use when i became a councillor
11. use one at work
12. always had problems getting into council website/intranet
13. I have a home office with a broadband connection and see no reason to plug in council laptop. i go to government websites and sometimes download 20 pages
14. I find it more convenient to use the laptop in certain circumstances (e g in the garden in the summer)
17. reduced number of units to check
18. do not own a computer
19. better and easier to use
21. use both my computer has a better printer
22. council laptop makes it easier to get council information
23. laptop provided by GBC out of date
24. advised to have a council laptop

25. it is set up with printer and internet for my own use
26. laptop doesn't provide enough access and is limited particularly with constant shutdowns
27. need one at home and at civic centre
28. unable to use software
29. because i pay a monthly subscription to AOL
30. Council printer supplied a load of old rubbish. occasionally material in code and cannot access so ask for hard copy
31. because it has full functionality and more software
34. uch paper work has to be hard copy. I am not convinced of the security of any computer system, so see little point in having a PC

Appendix 3

Survey of Members IT provision in other local authorities

Council	Specific IT Budget for Members?	Provisions available/ money provided	IT Training available	Technical support available?	Broadband provided?
Shepway Borough Council	£10,000	£1500 loan available for purchase of equipment to be repaid during term of office £220 allowance per annum for purchases of sundries	Have provided ECDL course for Members.	None	No
Swale Borough Council	No	Laptops and printer provided through IEG funding.	Setup training when given laptop.	Council's helpdesk- Office hours and no home visits.	No- have to use basic allowance
London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames	No	Provide Laptops, printers and print cartridges	Yes	Yes	Yes
Canterbury City Council	Fund of £3000 for maintenance- used for replacement of existing equipment if needed.	Provide Laptops and printers to those who request them.	Training programme 18 months ago with top up training on-going.	ICT helpdesk available to Members home visits.	£25 allowance for those subscribing to dial up facilities. £45 allowance for those subscribing to broadband facilities.
Dover District Council	Hardware taken out of overall IT hardware budget.	Laptops, Laser printers and laser print Cartridges are provided.	Training courses have been available for Members- one to one mentoring for those that request it.	ICT helpdesk	£15 pcm for Broadband

South Bedfordshire District Council	£2050 per year	Laptops, printers and print cartridges provided to those Members who request them Allowance for Members that use their own equipment	Can avail themselves to in-house IT training advisor	Yes	Only to the Executive
Kent County Council	No specific budget but £100K provided for the provision of IT equipment.	Dell PC, docking station; Dell Colour Printer/scanner and print cartridges are provided Supplied £1K P.A. to pay for all home office expenses, pc purchases and subsistence.	Training classes through adult education staff. Provide 1:1 instruction where requested and various in-house courses	Office hours support to Members	Felt not to be essential
Bedford Borough Council	Most expenditure is now on the renewal of equipment-repairs and renewals fund	Laptops, printers (combined printer/scanner/copier/fax) and print cartridges are provided	Basic training when new laptops/PC installed. Looking at offering Members the opportunity to gain the ECDL	Yes via the IT helpdesk- staffed between 08:00 and 18:30 with an answer phone facility outside of office hours	Yes for those that request it
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	No		On request	Yes	No
Maidstone Borough Council	Yes	Provide Laptops, printers and print cartridges.	Training is dealt with by the personnel department. One on one training in Member's homes by an external provider.	The IT section provides a Members support Officer.	Broadband connection provided

Appendix 4

Additional Reading

- 1 High Level Improvement Plan
- 2 Implementing Electronic Government Return 2005 Mid Term (IEG4.5)
- 3 Information and Communications Technology Strategy 2005 – 2007
- 4 Modern.gov www.modern.gov.co.uk
- 5 Elected Member Personal Development Planning and Skills Development Project.
(Final Report)

Glossary of terms

ECDL - European Computer Driving Licence
CPA – Comprehensive Performance Assessment
HILP – High Level Improvement Plan
IT – Information Technology
ICT - Information Communication Technology

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