RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 9

meeting date: 10 SEPTEMBER 2013
title: PUBLIC SERVICES NETWORK COMPLIANCE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

1   PURPOSE

1.1   To update members on the council's compliance with the Public Services Network and to seek committee's approval on the implementation of the recommendations from the inspection.

1.2   Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – none identified
- Corporate Priorities – The report helps the council satisfy its overarching corporate priority of being a well-managed council providing efficient services; particularly through managing change and organisational development and ensuring we are prepared and fit for purpose.
- Other considerations – none identified

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   As a Council we communicate electronically with the Government and other bodies through a secure network. We have recently had an onsite inspection to ensure we meet certain compliance requirements to be able to continue our connection to this network.

2.2   Six areas were highlighted during the inspection as needing further attention and we were told that our application to remain connected to the network **had been declined**. We were informed that we must gain compliance through the resubmission of evidence by the beginning of August.

2.3   Most of the concerns raised by the inspector were of a minor nature which we have since resolved relatively easily. One concern however relates to how councillors currently access their emails which as members will be aware is via the Councillor Portal.

2.4   We therefore have no option but to change the way in which members access their emails in the near future. Corporate Management Team (CMT) and our ICT section have considered the various options that are available to the council.

2.5   Given the need for an urgent response to the Cabinet Office, by the beginning of August, we reported the matter to the Budget Working Group on the 10 July and also wrote to each councillor to consult them on the proposal. In outline, it was proposed that the council supply each member with an encrypted and secured tablet device, which would be controlled by, and remain in the ownership of, the council.

2.6   The result of the consultation with members was that the majority of those who submitted a response agreed with the proposal.

2.7   Other advantages of this approach would be the ability to gradually move away from paper-based systems, such as committee reports and also allow councillors to have portable access to information.

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3   REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL CAPITAL SCHEME

3.1   Due to the nature of the scheme and level of expenditure that would be incurred, the scheme would need to be added to the capital programme.

3.2   The cost of this solution would be approximately £16,340 one off cost for the tablet device making use of Wi-Fi access, with case, including encryption and use of a device management solution by the ICT team. Members would be able to access their emails in Wi-Fi areas including the council chamber and council offices and obviously at home if they have Wi-Fi.

3.3   These costs have been appraised based on the procurement of Apple iPad2 devices and through the use of a Government Framework agreement which is open to all government bodies and through such economies of scale allows us to buy at an extremely competitive rate for such devices.

3.4   There are forecast savings of £3,000 on the budget for member allowances and expenses and it is planned to use this to part fund the capital scheme, if approved.

3.5   The change-over to using such tablet devices will be a scheme which will take a great deal of implementation and use of resources for the ICT team. Moreover, there will be the need for substantial training for members on the use of the devices and to demonstrate the flexibilities of their use.

3.6   Building on the use of the devices for emails, it is envisaged that this will be expanded to gradually encompass other council communications with members, including paper-based systems such as committee reports. This would present some savings in the longer term around the purchase of paper and ink.

3.7   It is recognised that the expansion of the use of the devices from the initial use for accessing email will be a gradual and evolving process as working practices in the preparation of councillor information such as agendas will need to change as well as the continual development of member training on the use of the devices.

3.8   It is envisaged that member training can be undertaken within existing budgets that are in place for this purpose.

4   RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1   The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Approval of the report would require the addition of the scheme to the capital programme. The capital scheme would be for £16,340. Member training can be provided from within existing resources. The capital scheme can also be part funded (£3,000) from existing revenue budgets relating to member allowances and expenses. Future savings on paper and ink may also be achieved as more council communications migrate.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Contract Procedure Rules will be followed for the procurement, through the use of the Government Framework agreement. Full support will be provided for the devices and training will be provided on their use.

- Political – none identified

- Reputation – Non-compliance with the Public Services Network would mean the disconnection of the council from valuable services, including impacts on benefit payments through the loss of vital links to the DWP. Such disconnection would harm the reputation of the council.

- Equality and Diversity – none identified

5   CONCLUSION

5.1   The cost of the scheme would be £16,430. However this can be part funded (£3,000) from existing revenue budgets relating to member allowances and expenses. There may also be future savings on paper and ink.

5.2   Full training will be given to members using existing budgets and it will be ensured that this training is gradually built on as more council communications migrate.

5.3   Full support will be given to members, as well as ICT support for the equipment.

6   RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

6.1   Approve the request to add the scheme to the council's capital programme for 2013/14 at a cost of £16,430, part funded (£3,000) from existing revenue budgets relating to member allowances and expenses.

HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES   DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

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