

FORWARD PLAN SELECT COMMITTEE – 27TH JANUARY 2004

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

EXECUTIVE - 7 JANUARY 2003

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT TITLE: IT Facilities for Members 2003

FP REF: CORP-03/04-26

FOR ACTION

NAME OF WARDS
ALL

1. Summary

- 1.1 It is proposed to extend the current pilot scheme for IT facilities for Members to a full programme which will allow all Members to have access to standard laptop computers, printers, office software and broadband connections to the Internet from their homes. The scheme will also improve the IT facilities which are available to Members from the group offices in the Town Hall.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the committee approve the report and agree to the current pilot arrangements being made available to all Members.
- 2.2 That this proposal be given high priority consideration for funding in 2004/5 and in future years as part of the Council's E-Government programme.
- 2.3 That Members determine the preferred funding option including any possible Member contributions.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs of the infrastructure set-up and an initial 10 Members have been covered by the £50k allocated from the E-Government programme in 2003/4.
- 3.2 Ongoing annual infrastructure costs will be around £22k.
- 3.3 The set-up cost for each Member is around £1850.00
- 3.4 Assuming that the main hardware and Microsoft software is replaced on a 3 year cycle then the average annual cost for equipment and Internet connection for each individual Member will be around £1000.00.

- 3.5 The average annual cost of the scheme once it is fully functioning for all 63 Members will be around £85k. The ongoing annual cost could be reduced by Members contributing a proportion of the individual costs from their allowances - for example, if all Members contributed the annual £360 ADSL Internet connection charge then the average annual cost of the scheme would be reduced to £62k. Not all Members may wish to take up the use of the remote facilities, in which case the total cost will be reduced.
- 3.6 It is proposed that the ongoing costs of the scheme are provided for by the e-Government budget commencing in 2004/5. It is expected that implementing the full scheme initially will be spread over 2 years and will utilise leasing where appropriate to optimise the use of financial resources.

4. Staffing Implications

- 4.1 The additional IT and Democratic Services support work will be accommodated within existing staff resources.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 A legal agreement concerning use of the facilities and confirming Council ownership of the equipment has been drawn up by Legal Services and is signed by each Member when they receive their laptop and initial training.
- 5.2 The original proposals for dual council/private use and possible tax savings are no longer applicable because the security requirements effectively prevent private use of the laptops. It has been agreed with the Inland Revenue that less than £2,500 of IT facilities will not be regarded as a taxable benefit while their main use is for Council business.
- 5.3 Budgetary provision has been made for a level of ongoing legal advice.

Detail

6.1 Background

An increasing number of local authorities provide IT equipment to Members. This trend has been accelerated by the recent emphasis on e-government and the need for councillors to have access to email and online information. This will make communication with constituents and Council staff easier and allow more efficient access to relevant information.

The Remote IT Facilities for Members report in 2001 agreed a minimal set of IT services for Members and the IT Facilities for Members report in January 2003 proposed a pilot trial of a wider set of facilities including laptops and broadband connection to the Internet from Members' homes.

Provision for the pilot trial was made from the e-Government budget in 2003/4. This has been operating since June 2003 and so far 8 Members have been issued with laptops and broadband connections.

Members have had PCs and printers in their group offices for several years but there is no recognised budget for upgrading them. It is proposed to include this equipment in the overall scheme and introduce a 3 year replacement cycle in line with the laptop equipment.

6.2 The 2003 pilot trial

The first Members in the pilot trial received their laptops in June 2003. Technical difficulties mainly associated with implementing adequate security measures in the initial stages of the trial caused delays to the project but these have now been resolved and 8 Members have now been issued with laptops, printers and broadband connections. Additional printers for use by the laptops were installed in the Group offices.

The requirement for adequate security has resulted in significant modifications to the original proposals. A centralised system for automatic distribution of anti-virus and firewall software had to be implemented. Originally it was intended to allow considerable flexibility for Members to modify the configuration of the laptop and to install their own software. However this proved to be impractical in terms of the security implications and the software configuration of the laptop is now fixed when it is first set up and there is very little scope for Members to change this themselves.

There have been various difficulties with the broadband connections and these have not always been easy for Members to install at home themselves. ADSL routers rather than modems have been purchased so that Members can attach more than one PC to their broadband service.

The extension of the Council's VPN (virtual private network) system which provides secure access to the Council's data network was successful. The wireless network at the Town Hall was more complex than anticipated and there are still some problems with connection times and speed. Security penetration testing was carried out by an external organisation and demonstrated that the security precautions were adequate.

A legal agreement concerning use of the facilities and confirming Council ownership of the equipment is signed by each Member when they receive their laptop and initial training.

No provision was made in the pilot trial for any adaptation for disabled use and it is proposed that £1k p.a. should be included in the budget to allow for future disability software and hardware modifications.

A survey of the participants of the trial shows that the service has largely been operating successfully once initial problems have been resolved. The key findings from the survey were:

- Whilst there had been some initial teething problems, most of these had been rectified. In some cases the difficulties were due more to lack of familiarity with the equipment than to actual technical problems.

- Members were generally agreed that the provision of this type of IT facility was essential for Councillors.
- All pilot Members have either already used the facilities to communicate with their constituents and carry out work-related research on the Internet, or are planning to do so. Most thought that the laptop and Internet connection had significantly increased their ability to fulfil their council duties.
- In terms of contribution to the cost of the service, Members generally felt that they would be willing to pay for all or some of the ADSL broadband costs (about £360 pa) but that they should not pay for any laptop costs because they were unable to install or use their own software or hardware.
- The less IT experienced Members suggested that ECDL training/certification would be beneficial before getting their laptops. In addition, general training on how to use the Internet for research, email and other purposes would be advantageous. There were very positive reports about the ECDL training from those who had received it.
- The more familiar with IT a Member was, the more satisfied they were with the facilities provided by the pilot trial.
- Less IT experienced Members would have liked their equipment to be installed for them at their homes because it was difficult to remember all the required activities after their initial familiarisation session in the Town Hall.
- More IT experienced Members wanted to be able to access their Council email and the Internet from anywhere, either by using a dial-up connection, or by using the various wireless zones around the country. (However this would have security implications at the present time).
- It was stated that money had been saved as fewer letters were being mailed out or sent by courier, and fewer phone calls were made. (Note that the cost of sending an email over ADSL broadband is zero and therefore less than the price of a phone call).
- It was felt that there might need to be a dedicated help-line provided for the reporting of any technical problems and that less IT experienced Members would need a greater degree of help to resolve their problems. More regular updates of progress on reported problems would have been appreciated.
- It was felt that the current levels of security and functionality may have been more than was necessary. (However the current security is essential given the nature of the information accessed and the need for the Council to comply with Government security guidelines. The functionality provided on the laptops has been designed to accommodate the needs of most Members).

6.3 Hardware

It is proposed that the Council will issue standard Windows based laptop computers and printers on loan to all Members. Laptops are more suitable than desktop PCs in this case because they will reduce support costs and allow greater convenience for Members.

The laptops will be equipped with wireless access to the Council's network within the Town Hall so that Committee papers on the Intranet and other documents could

be accessed easily in meetings. It is expected that secure wireless access will be extended to other Council offices in the future.

Consumables such as paper and inkjet/laser cartridges would be made available for collection from Democratic Services.

It is proposed to upgrade the desktop and network printers in the group offices and then replace them on a 3 year cycle.

The possible use of redundant Council desktop or laptop PCs was rejected for the pilot trial because of the additional support costs which would arise from the variety and age of the hardware and software. The Council only disposes of PCs when they are no longer adequate to run the required software.

6.4 Software

A standard software configuration will be installed on all machines.

The Council will purchase standard Microsoft Office software for Word, Excel, etc, Lotus Notes for email (where required) and provide remote connectivity and anti-virus/firewall software. Additional security software will be installed on each laptop.

A standard software "image" will enable the basic operating system and application software to be reinstalled if necessary. Any personal data will be the responsibility of individual Members and would not be reinstalled by the IT Unit.

Updates to the anti-virus and firewall software will be automatically applied when the laptop is connected to the Council network.

Members will be responsible for backing-up their own data on the laptops.

The desktop PCs in the group offices will have the standard office software installed.

6.5 Connectivity to the Council network and Internet

The Council will purchase an ADSL broadband connection from a common Internet service provider for each Member. This is significantly faster than an ordinary modem connection and does not interfere with normal use of the existing telephone line. There is a standard monthly charge for ADSL and the computer can be connected to the Internet at any time without incurring any additional charges.

Arrangements to provide a similar service would be used where a Member has already committed to a cable provider and does not have a separate BT phone line but in such cases only the Internet access costs of the cable service would be covered. Cable and any other broadband providers that do not satisfy the Council's connection requirements cannot be used.

A logon and password will be provided to ensure secure access to the Council's data network via the VPN (Virtual Private Network) system.

The desktop PCs and printers in the group offices are already connected to the Council's data network.

6.6 **Email**

Members can use any Internet email provider or they can opt to have an email account on the Council's Lotus Notes system.

All Members have their own email address (the current format is cllr.firstname.lastname@brent.gov.uk) and email is automatically forwarded by the Council's email system to whatever email location is appropriate.

Members who already have their own Internet email account will need to make sure that this is still available via the new broadband connection. Members who use the Council's Lotus Notes email will be able to access this via the VPN connection to the Council's data network.

6.7 **Support**

The IT Unit provides support via a telephone Help Desk from 8am to 6pm Monday to Thursday (5pm on Fridays) for data network connectivity and system software problems.

There will be additional work to support the new hardware and software and in order to minimise the costs it is proposed that the laptops and software would be supplied in a standard configuration which can be easily replaced when problems occur.

If the equipment needs to be repaired or software problems fixed then the Member would be responsible for bringing it to the IT Unit who would either resolve the problem, re-install the standard software configuration or provide a replacement machine. In order to minimise support costs there would be no visits by IT Unit staff to Members' homes with the exception of initial assistance with setting-up the ADSL connection if necessary.

The current levels of support are only sufficient to cover the primary equipment and software – the help desk will not be able to provide support on issues which are not directly related to the equipment provided.

Council IT staff currently have no experience of Apple or Unix software and support can only be provided for Windows based PCs.

6.8 **Training**

Members are encouraged to obtain the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) level of IT proficiency.

Some funding is available from the Democratic Services training budget on a first-come first-served basis. Members are responsible for organising their own ECDL training.

6.9 Costs

The initial set-up costs of £32k for equipment, central software and testing have already been met from the 2003/4 e-government budget. Initial replacement of the PCs and printers in the three Group offices will cost around £6k and will be carried out in 2004/5.

The annual ongoing costs of the service infrastructure are: -

IT Support/Helpdesk	16,000
Test equipment	2,000
Group Office PCs and printers (3 year cycle)	2,000
Legal advice	1,000
Disability provision	1,000
Total	£22,000

The approximate individual costs of the service for each Member are: -

Item	Initial	Annual	Replacement
Laptop	950		310
Printer	120		40
Router	90		30
Software	190		120
Consumables		100	
Broadband		360	
Insurance		40	
Totals	£1,350	£500	£500

The initial set up cost for each Member is thus $£1,350 + £500 = \mathbf{£1850}$.

The average annual costs for each Member once the scheme is fully operational will be $£500 + £500 = \mathbf{£1000}$.

The average annual cost for all 63 Members would be $£63,000 + £22,000 = \mathbf{£85,000}$.

Not every Member will require Lotus Notes email so these costs (around £100 per user) have been excluded from the totals.

It is assumed that equipment and Microsoft software is replaced on a 3 year cycle.

6. Background Information

Details of Documents

Remote IT Facilities for Members – 31 July 2001

IT Facilities for Members – 16 December 2002

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers can find them on the Council's website at www.brent.gov.uk/democracy or can contact:

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BERNARD DIAMANT
Director of Corporate Services

AGREEMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF COMPUTER EQUIPMENT FOR USE BY COUNCIL MEMBERS (DRAFT).

Between:

The London Borough of Brent ("the Council") and

xxx of xxx.

1 THIS AGREEMENT sets out the basis on which the Council will provide you with the use of the computer, software and ADSL internet connection equipment described in the Schedule to this agreement at paragraph 1 (the "Computer Equipment"). The payments to be made by you in respect of the use of Computer Equipment are set out at paragraph 2 of the schedule.

2 By signing this agreement you agree to comply with the terms and conditions set out below.

USE

1. You will only use the Computer Equipment for purposes connected with your functions and duties as an elected member of the Council.
2. You must not use the Computer Equipment for any purpose unconnected with your role as a Council member including the production, distribution, storing of party political information or promotional or publicity material.
3. You must not use, the Computer Equipment to access, view or download, store, make or distribute obscene or offensive or prohibited material.
4. You must operate the Computer Equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and in accordance with the instructions of the Council's Information Technology Officers and with the Council's IT Standards for the use of computers and the internet. In particular, you must:
 - 4.1. Not disclose passwords to any other person and must take reasonable care to ensure that the Computer Equipment is not used by others.
 - 4.2. Not disclose confidential or personal data to unauthorised persons or for unauthorised purposes and shall only store, process or disclose personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - 4.3. Immediately inform the Council if you suspect that personal data has been disclosed otherwise than in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
 - 4.4. Not use the Computer Equipment in any way which breaches Copyright or property rights of any other person.
5. You must take reasonable care to avoid damaging the Computer Equipment or using the Computer Equipment in a manner that may cause damage to property or injury to persons.
6. You must take reasonable steps to protect the Computer Equipment from loss or theft.

7. If you lose or damage the Computer Equipment through improper use or failure to comply with this agreement the Council will not be under an obligation to replace it. The Council may also terminate this agreement and require you to return the Computer Equipment immediately.

INSURANCE

8. The Council will insure the Computer Equipment against loss and accidental damage. You must comply with the Council's instructions as to use, which may affect the Council's insurances in respect of the Computer Equipment and any other insured risks.

SOFTWARE

9. The Council will install software on the computer. The Council is the licenced owner of the software and grants you a licence to use the software. You must only use the software in accordance with these terms of licence notified to you by the Council. You must not make copies of, or alter or remove the software installed on the Computer Equipment.
10. Should it be necessary to upgrade or change the software to maintain compatibility with the Council's systems or for any other reason, you will bring the computer to ITU Operations, Room 103 in the Town Hall for the work to be done.

SUPPORT AND REPAIR

11. If you require technical assistance or if you believe the Computer Equipment to be faulty, damaged or otherwise malfunctioning you should contact the IT Help Desk on 020 8937 6000 during normal office hours for assistance or diagnosis of the problem.
12. The Council will be responsible for repairs and maintenance of the Computer Equipment. You must not allow anyone to repair or maintain the Computer Equipment, other than appropriate Council Officers or the Council's authorised agent. If it is necessary to physically examine or repair or carry out maintenance work on the computer or software you must bring the computer to ITU Operations, Room 103 in the Town Hall.
13. You should note that software on the Computer Equipment may be re-configured when the Computer Equipment is returned for repair and that the data held on the Computer Equipment may be lost.

DATA BACKUP

14. The Council will not be responsible for data stored on the Computer Equipment. If there is information or data that is important to you, you should make backup copies of the data on storage media such as the CD-ROM R/W provided.
15. At the end of this contract the Council will remove/erase all data stored on the computer.

COUNCIL SERVICES

16. The Council will provide and install in your home the ADSL connection as described in the Computer Equipment Schedule. To use this service you must have a BT telephone line or suitable cable connection available. The Council will not provide BT telephone line under this agreement but will upgrade the telephone line with the ADSL connection and equipment comprised in the Computer Equipment.

17. If you move home the Council will provide and install a new connection provided that the Council will only provide you with one ADSL connection at any time.
18. To connect the Computer Equipment to the Council's Network and Intranet you will be provided with a remote access password. You must not disclose or allow anyone else to use this password.

OWNERSHIP

19. The Council is at all times the owner of the Computer Equipment. At the end of this contract you must return the computer to the Council.
20. This agreement cannot be transferred to another computer and you cannot exchange the Computer Equipment for another computer unless the Council agrees.
21. This agreement is between you and the Council. You cannot sell, charge, lend or otherwise dispose of the Computer Equipment to another person or allow other persons to use it.

TERM and PAYMEANT

22. This Agreement is for 3 years from the 20th of June 2003. During that time you agree to make the payments set out in Section 2 of the Schedule. The Council will deduct the payments from your [Member] allowance in accordance with the instalments set out in Section 2 of the Schedule.

TERMINATION

23. The Council may terminate this agreement if you breach these conditions and you do not remedy the breach within 60 days of notice from the Council of the breach.
24. The Council may terminate this agreement immediately in the following circumstances;
 - 24.1. You use the Computer Equipment in a manner which constitutes a serious breach of this agreement;
 - 24.2. You cease to be a Member of the Council;
 - 24.3. The Council has previously informed you that your are in breach of this agreement and you continue to breach this agreement or you subsequently commit breach of this agreement.;
 - 24.4. You use the Computer equipment in a manner that the Council reasonably considers may expose the Council to any claim, cost action, loss or liability whether or not such use is a breach of this agreement.
25. If the Council is no longer able to provide the Computer equipment or any part of it the Council will endeavour to give you at least 3 months prior notice of its intention to end this agreement.
26. At the end of this agreement however terminated you must stop using the Computer equipment and return the Computer Equipment to the Council and allow the Council to remove any part of the Computer Equipment installed in your home.

27. Where terminated by the Council you will not be liable for any payments due under this agreement after the date of termination provided you have returned the Computer Equipment to the Council.

This agreement is made on __/__/2003.

Signed by xxx.

SCHEDULE

SECTION 1. COMPUTER EQUIPMENT

1.1 Computer Type; Compaq. Model; EVO N1020V. Serial Number; recorded by ITU Operations.
Configuration Pentium4 2.4Ghz, Win XP Pro, 40Gig, 256 Memory, Wireless Connectivity,
NIC, DVD/CD-RW Combo Drive.

1.2 Software; recorded by ITU Operations.

1.3. ADSL Equipment; NETGEAR DG814 4 Port DSL Modem Internet Gateway.

SECTION 2. PAYMENTS

The payment amount and frequency of payment instalments is yet to be decided. The Councillor will be advised of changes to this payment amount and payment schedule at the earliest opportunity.