
BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

JOINT AUDIT & SCRUTINY PANEL

**Held on Wednesday, 2 March 2011 at 10.00 am in
St George's Room, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr S.G. Bambridge
Councillor Claire Bowes

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)

In Attendance

Adam Colby

Mark Finch

Helen McAleer

Teresa Smith

Kevin J Taylor

- Senior Business Improvement Officer

- Head of Finance

- Senior Committee Officer

- Committee Officer

- Head of ICT

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1/11 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2/11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr R Childerhouse and Mr C Jordan.

3/11 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were none.

4/11 NON-MEMBERS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE MEETING

There were none.

5/11 MEMBERS ICT OPTIONS

The Head of ICT advised Members that attempts to obtain trial iPads on loan had been unsuccessful, and due to the costs there was a reluctance to spend money on such devices until their viability had been proven. Therefore, the Business Improvement Team had prepared a Business Case for a number of options for new/replacement ICT equipment.

The Senior Business Improvement Officer then presented the report which looked at six options against set objectives with a breakdown of the costs including hardware, software, training, support, printer and postage costs, but not including depreciation.

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The sixth option, which was for an allowance, was based on information provided by Compass Point. It was noted that this option might have tax implications.

An additional option was the Kindle, which was light, portable and had good battery life. These were currently being trialled by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Resources.

With regard to the red traffic light ratings, the Chairman was interested in learning more about the business cases of two other local authorities, known to be trialling iPads. He asked for information on what Leicester and Warrington were doing and why. The report needed to contain more supporting information to explain the findings.

The Panel was under pressure to get the right solution to ensure that new Councillors would be able to function from day one. He suggested that any option that did not meet the basic requirements of a Member should be discounted.

The Head of ICT noted that one of the main aims was to reduce costs by significantly reducing printing (and that this would require a cultural change in the way of working for Members).

The Chairman acknowledged this but reiterated that the aim was to reduce printing, not to eliminate it totally, bearing in mind that a solution needed to provide 'as is' capability (ie would allow annotation of documents when on the train – without wider connectivity). Members agreed unanimously; although they were aware that highlighting and annotation could be done electronically they were not yet at the point of being able to do without paper copies of agendas.

Members needed to be given the right tools to allow them to do their job efficiently and the Business Case needed to consider both financial and practical aspects.

The Head of ICT agreed. The options under consideration gave Members flexibility and allowed choice and given different needs, no one size would fit all although all agreed that a single 'best fit' would be preferable.

The various options were considered and the following comments were made:

- iPads – red ratings needed more information to explain the findings, however proposed costs were prohibitive
- Chip PCs – should be discounted because they were not portable and Members needed to be able to work in a variety of locations
- Duo's – appeared flimsy and might have long term maintenance issues
- Kindles – should be discounted because they did not have a print capability and could not display in colour

**Kevin J
Taylor**

Action By

It was noted that Options 3, 4 and 5 were currently affordable. The Head of Finance explained that the £50,000 figure was based on the Refresh budget, but that this could be stretched as there was more available.

Members considered that Option 1 (Laptop – with wireless capability) and Option 4 (Netbook with additional screen, keyboard and mouse) would meet the majority of needs.

If an allowance was to be paid it would need to be more than £400 for the first year – to allow for the purchase of hardware, etc, but then less for the following years. Costs would be inclusive of maintenance (to be arranged by Members).

The Head of Finance advised that if an allowance was to be proposed it would have to be approved by the Members' Remuneration Panel.

In conclusion the Chairman said that options needed to be fully worked up to give the Business Improvement Sub-Committee sufficient information to make a choice and to get the equipment in time for the new Members induction day on 12 May.

The Head of ICT said that it might be possible to get some devices in and ready to go so that new Members who did not have their own PCs would be on-line from day one and those that did have their own equipment could potentially be provided with Citrix connectivity to begin with, allowing kit issue to be staggered.

The Senior Business Improvement Officer noted that there might be an opportunity to reduce the support provided to Members which would be a tangible cost saving. The Head of ICT agreed and thought that the overall cost of support to Members and of paper produced was likely to reduce due to the provision of new equipment whilst also delivering an improved service.

However, it was pointed out that Members were different to Officers and needed a different degree of support which included 'out of hours' assistance. They would therefore oppose the loss of direct Member support.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Audit Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Commission be advised that the Panel did not support Options 2, 3 and 5. Options 1 OR 4 and Option 6 were supported.

The meeting closed at 11.17 am

CHAIRMAN