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BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

JOINT AUDIT & SCRUTINY PANEL

Held on Tuesday, 25 October 2011 at 10.00 am in
Norfolk Room, Conference Suite, Elizabeth House, Dereham

PRESENT

Mr S.G. Bambridge
Mr R.P. Childerhouse

Mr J.P. Cowen (Chairman)
Mr C.R. Jordan

In Attendance

Brian Cox
Joanne Linton
Helen McAleer

- IT Consultant
- Service Delivery Manager
- Senior Committee Officer

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11/11 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12/11 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Bowes and Mr T Jermy.

13/11 DECLARATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 3)

It was noted that all Members had a personal interest in the matters under discussion.

14/11 THOUGHTS ON MEMBER ROLL-OUT (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Mr Bambridge started by congratulating the ICT section for a good exchange of equipment. Once the roll-out had begun it had gone very well. Almost all complaints about the system had now been eliminated and Member training was well in-hand.

He drew attention to the following conclusions in his paper and to some amendments and additions suggested by the ICT section.

- Suggested amendments: paragraph two, change '*officers*' to '*ICT Management*' and paragraph four, change '*slow rollout*' to '*delay to the start of the rollout*'.

The main problem had been caused by the late decision on which kit to purchase, and then the kit had been slow to arrive. Mr Bambridge stressed the need to prepare for the next rollout following the elections in 2015. He suggested that the Panel should have made its decision by the end of 2014, allowing

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time for new equipment to be costed, ordered and prepared in advance of the elections. Councillors needed to have their equipment as soon as they were elected.

Mr Childerhouse asked how soon unopposed Members could be issued with their kit and Mr Bambridge felt that they should be first in line and should be issued with any new equipment before the elections if possible.

- The level of equipment to be provided should be a Member-led decision.
- A four year rollout should be recommended.
- The new equipment should be the best available.
- New Members should receive priority during the rollout.
- There should be no change to equipment specification without the agreement of the Panel. Officers should advise on cost, etc but the decision must be made by Members.
- In future there should be a single manager responsible for the project.

The Chairman and Mr Jordan felt that the Panel should meet at least once or twice a year to keep up with developments.

The IT Consultant encouraged Members to consider adopting a Policy to give Members a payment to purchase their own equipment. The ICT section could then provide facilities for access and connectivity. That was the system used by a lot of other Local Authorities and in his professional view was the best way forward. He acknowledged that advice given to the Panel previously had been based on an extremely strict interpretation of Government security requirements which had restricted choice.

The Service Delivery Manager explained that the rules had been provided to meet Audit requirements and may have been misinterpreted. There was an Audit due in November and clarification would be sought at that time.

She mentioned that the Team had been tasked to provide standard kit, build and connectivity to Members and had received training to be able to support the new kit issued. However, some Members had requested 'add-ons' such as Spider which caused support problems.

The Chairman said that it was important for the Panel to keep ahead of the game. He did not think that all Members needed the full capability that laptops and PCs provided. Looking ahead the Panel needed to review how the market was moving and what technology was available to meet the core requirements of Councillors: to read documents, access the intranet, surf the web and send and receive e-mails. He asked why only Blackberries could be used to access Citrix.

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The IT Consultant advised that a GCSx ruling had resulted in a well-publicised issue where Government I-Phones had to be replaced with Blackberries. If Members wanted to connect to other devices a project could be started but it would need a budget.

He said there was also an unresolved issue with regard to using WebEx or Skype. Previously it had been thought that Skype did not meet GCSx requirements, however, despite having requested guidance from GCSx in August, no response had been received. He suggested that the way forward was to write to GCSx saying that the Council would be using Skype if that was the system that Members would prefer.

Mr Bambridge agreed that Skype would be the preferred option for Members as it was something they were familiar with and it was free. However, he advised that it would increase costs not to use WebEx as South Holland already used that system.

The Chairman noted that whatever system was used would have to be flexible and have the ability to expand if necessary. Also Members needed to be able to use it at the Council Offices and in their homes.

It was agreed that more information was needed before a decision could be made. Training for WebEx should be put on-hold until the choice was clear.

The IT Consultant was asked to look at the options and when he had the necessary information the Panel would meet again to consider the way forward.

The Chairman and other Members congratulated the ICT team on how well the rollout had gone.

Brian Cox

15/11 MEMBERS ICT REFRESH (AGENDA ITEM 6)

The Chairman was disappointed to see that one Member had refused to have any kit but it was accepted that the Council had no control over his decision.

The only other Member to refuse the new kit was a twin-hatted Member who was happy to use his County Council equipment.

No other points were raised and the report was noted.

The meeting closed at 10.40 am

CHAIRMAN