

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY COMMISSION  
ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2015**

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**Status:** *For discussion*  
**Title:** *Electronic despatch of agenda and reports*  
**Originator:** *Verina Wenham, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer*  
**Where from:** *The Originator*  
**Where to next:** *To make recommendations to Executive as appropriate*

Objective: to consider the possibility of electronic despatch of meeting papers

1 Outcome sought from the Commission

To note the recent legislative changes that now provide for the sending of electronic summons' and agenda for formal meetings; and

Make such recommendations regarding the Council's Procedure Rules for consideration by the Constitutional Review Committee for referral to Council.

2 Background

In 2014 proposals were put forward by the Secretary of State to relax the requirements that all summons' and agenda for formal meetings of the Council ( including committees and sub-committees) have to be posted to a councillors' home address. Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972 was drafted very narrowly and did not allow for the possibility of the electronic despatch of summonses for meetings.

The Local Authorities (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 came into effect on 30 January 2015. This now provides for electronic despatch as envisaged by the 2014 proposals. The effect of the 2015 Order is to amend the provisions of Schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972. It now provides an option to send the summons to an email address. This is an "opt in" provision and the councillor has to consent to receiving summons in this way and to not have withdrawn that consent. Without such consent councillors will continue to receive documents by post. Currently all summonses, and reports for formal council meetings are sent to all members of the relevant committee, sub-committee or scrutiny panel. Members who are not on the relevant committee are not sent the papers unless a specific request has been made.

All papers relating to non-statutory meetings (i.e. task panels, Executive Advisory panels) are already circulated electronically. Paper copies are made available at the meeting.

The successful adoption of this approach would require the majority of members to sign up for electronic despatch. A fully implemented approach would also require a review of the Council's ICT policy and possibly how the documents will be accessed at the meeting itself. Paper copies of the papers would be circulated at the meeting in any event in the first instance.

Cost of the current process

The budget for postage to members in 2014/2015 was £4,000. The actual amount incurred for member postage was £2,752. In the same year the budget for printing for members was £15,400. The actual amount incurred that year for printing was £18,852

### 3 Equality Analysis Implications

- 3.1 In the event of Scrutiny recommending a change to current practices, Equality analysis documentation will be refreshed.

### 4 Legal Issues

- 4.1 The legal requirements for the despatch of documents is set out in the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) and as detailed in the body of this report.

### 5 Consultation

- 5.1 All members have been consulted on whether they would agree to receive documents electronically. 12 members have responded and the comments received have been set out in Appendix A to this report.

The majority of members who responded to the consultation have indicated that they would like to continue to receive paper copies of agenda and reports.

### 6 Meeting the objective

- 6.1 To consider making any suggestions regarding the future despatch of council reports.

### 7 Background Papers

- 7.1 Local Government Act 1972;  
Local Authorities (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015

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**Previous report(s):**            **None**

**Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N**

**Appendices:** *list any appendices here including title and filename in brackets (e.g. Performance Data 2010 (perfddata.doc)).*

**A. Consultation Responses**

**B.**

**C.**

**D.**