

**PAPER 1**

**REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 19 October, 2015**

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**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2015  
**Subject:** Councillor Broadband Provision  
**Report of:** Chris James, ICT Services Manager  
**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr James Hallam, Portfolio holder – Corporate Services  
**Status:** Decision  
**Relevant Ward(s):** All

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1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. To consider and agree the proposed change to Councillor broadband provision.

2. Recommendation:

Executive approve that either:

- 2.1. **In line with all other local authorities contacted Harborough District Council neither provides a broadband service or a financial contribution towards one for elected members.**

Or

- 2.2. **Harborough District Council pay elected members a financial contribution towards a broadband service as detailed in section 4.3.**

3. Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1. It is necessary to review the services offered to councillors to enable them to gain access to Council information systems; ensuring that a suitable and cost effective solution is provided.
- 3.2. This review and its resulting decisions will help formalise ICT provision, clarifying the level of service expected and provided.
- Standardised equipment and services will provide consistency for Harborough District Council's (HDC's) councillors, remove duplication of equipment & services and increase their usability.

#### 4. Key Facts

##### 4.1. Current broadband provision, support and other connectivity arrangements

- Provision of a capped broadband service, if required, with approximate costs of £25 per month per councillor. If all 37 councillors took this option the total cost would be  $£25 \times 12 \times 37 = £11.1K - £44.4K$  over a 4 year term.
  - The previous year's annual billed amount for Councillor broadband was approximately £12K; equating to £48K for a four year term. Occasionally additional costs, associated with download limits being exceeded, have been incurred; the broadband service provided is sufficient for HDC's Citrix use.
- Access to the HDC ICT Helpdesk between 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday as well as Councillor ICT Surgeries before Full Council Meetings.
- Provision of Wi-Fi for councillors throughout The Symington Building; councillors are provided with an individual password to enable connection.

The current arrangements are primarily a responsive service (provision of a broadband service is at a councillor's request) as opposed to a universal and consistent provision to all councillors. Currently approximately half of all councillors take up HDC's offer of broadband.

##### 4.2. An assessment of alternative equipment/options

Enquiries have been made with other Local Authority partners to understand the services they provide; this includes Leicestershire County Council as well as the District & Borough Councils.

##### **Councillor broadband provision in Leicestershire:**

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Provision</b>
Leicestershire County Council	Not provided
Hinckley & Bosworth BC	Not provided
Blaby DC	Not provided
Oadby & Wigston BC	Not provided
Melton BC	Not provided
Charnwood BC	Not provided
North West Leicestershire DC	Not provided

## Councillor Wi-Fi:

Local Authority	Provision
Hinckley & Bosworth BC	Provided within most of the Council buildings
Blaby DC	Provided within most of the Council buildings
Oadby & Wigston BC	Provided within most of the Council buildings
Melton BC	Provided within most of the Council buildings
Charnwood BC	Provided
North West Leicestershire DC	Limited provision

4.3. It is clear that the majority of councillors have existing private arrangements with internet service providers for broadband. This often leads to councillors having two phone lines and two broadband connections. This doesn't demonstrate value for money. In future one option, in line with the rest of Leicestershire councils is that no provision is made by the Council for members broadband alternatively the Council could decide to make a contribution (2015/16 £15 per month) which will require councillors to make their own arrangements for a broadband connection.

- In the unlikely event that councillors do not have an existing broadband service they will need to ensure that one is installed.
- It is proposed that existing HDC provided analogue lines and broadband services will be ceased after three months to allow sufficient time for councillors to make alternative arrangements if required.

## 5. Legal Issues

5.1. Councillors will continue to be bound by the relevant ICT policies when using information systems.

## 6. Resource Issues

6.1. Predominantly ICT resource is required to cease existing services. However, there is potential for an increase in the cost of Councillor expenses, if the option for the Council to pay a contribution towards broadband is approved, as a result of increased claims for broadband, impacting cash resources for the Council.

6.2. If the decision was to not make a contribution towards broadband provision the projected saving is £48k over a four year period.

**6.3. Resource table – current and proposed costs (if a Council contribution towards provision was agreed)**

Current costs (for those councillors currently using HDC provided broadband).	
c.20 HDC provided analogue lines and Council broadband service (including excessive usage charges).	<b>£12K</b> per annum (based on previous year's usage)
Total:	<b>Projected 4 year cost: £48K</b>

New proposed solution costs (if all councillors were to claim the monthly £15 personal broadband contribution).	
Annual contribution to personal broadband – £15 month x 12 x 37	<b>£6.6K</b> per annum
Total:	<b>Projected 4 year cost: £26.4K</b>

The option to move to a contribution towards broadband is forecast to make a **£5.4K** saving per year and a **£21.6K** saving over a four year period. The transition towards the new standardised offer by the end of 2015/16 should mean that costs are managed during the financial year. Any additional costs will be funded from the Council's revenue contingency.

6.4. Any contribution is a taxable benefit and therefore claims for the broadband contribution will need to be made by councillors via MyView in line with the time constraints for claiming expenses detailed within the Constitution. A P11d will then be supplied at the end of the tax year, which will allow those Members who do not pay tax to recover any tax paid during the year.

7. Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

7.1. Whilst the proposed changes in this report do not result in changes to systems access ICT Services will continue to offer assistance, if required, to improve system accessibility. This will be achieved, where possible, by using built-in functionality of software; for example changing screen resolutions or font sizes.

8. Risk Management Implications

8.1. Risks and opportunities identified

- Opportunity – achieve savings.

- Opportunity – increased choice, councillors can choose the most suitable broadband product for them.
- Opportunity – equitable solution for all councillors.
- Opportunity – simplifying the support of the broadband service (only 2 parties involved).
- Risk – loss of connectivity if no alternative is secured prior to HDC's service being ceased. The 3 month window prior to ceasing current services should mitigate this.
- Risk – councillors will be required to resolve broadband issues themselves. This is mitigated by the increased maturity within the industry with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) often claiming 99% availability.

## 9. Consultation

9.1. Consultation has taken place with Councillor Hallam, ICT's Portfolio Holder.

## 10. Options

10.1. Do nothing. HDC continue to provide the current provision: a separate analogue phone line and a broadband service. The monthly cost of this solution at £25 per month is £10 more per month than the proposed broadband contribution. This option is not recommended due to cost.

10.2. HDC make a £15 monthly contribution to councillor broadband costs. This option reduces cost, encourages electronic working and enables increased choice when selecting a broadband service.

10.3. HDC do not provide or fund any councillor broadband services, removing all associated costs. This option would bring Harborough District Council into line with all other local authorities contacted.

## 11. Background Papers

11.1. None.

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

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

**Ward Members Notified:** Y/N

**Appendices:** None.