

Report of the Head of Democratic Services

Council – 12 August 2014

DELIVERY OF AGENDAS TO COUNCILLORS

Purpose:	To remind Councillors of their rights regarding the Delivery of Agendas and to seek opinions.
Policy Framework:	None.
Reason for Decision:	To lower the cost of the weekly Courier Service.
Consultation:	Finance, Legal, Democratic Services Committee.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that:
1)	The Democratic Services Committee recommends Option 2 to Council for approval.
Report Author:	Huw Evans
Finance Officer:	Carl Billingsley
Legal Officer:	Patrick Arran

1. Introduction

1.1 Councillors who are summoned to attend meetings of the Authority are to be provided with a summons. Schedule 12, Paragraph 4 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides as follows:

*“(b) A summons to attend the meeting... shall, subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, **be left at or sent by post to the usual place of residence of every member of the Council.**”*

1.2 Historically, the Authority has provided a weekly courier service to the home address of each Councillor. The Friday courier service was initially intended to deliver actual summons to Councillors; however over the years this has slipped to include almost everything placed in a Councillors pigeon hole.

1.3 The Courier Service is expensive and in light of the difficult financial challenges facing the Authority, all arrangements need to be reviewed in order to try and seek a cheaper yet effective alternative.

1.4 Overtime costs alone are in the region of £7,500 per annum. There are also additional costs associated with the service due to fuel and vehicle costs.

1.5 The purpose of this report is to request the Council to consider alternatives to the current arrangement which is untenable.

1.6 Whilst the statutory provision refers to the Councillors having papers delivered to their home address, the Act does provide for an alternative:

“(3) *If a member of a principal council gives notice in writing to the proper officer of the council **that he desires summonses to attend meetings of the council to be sent to him at some address specified in the notice other than his place of residence**, any summons addressed to him and left at or sent by post to that address shall be deemed sufficient service of the summons.*”

1.7 A number of Councillors have already opted out of this system, choosing either to receive them electronically or instead to collect their Summons / Agendas directly from the Civic Centre.

1.8 This report was considered by the Democratic Services Committee on 16 July 2014.

2. Use of Technology to Distribute Agendas

2.1 The Democratic Services Team has been publishing agendas on line and distributing electronic agendas via e-mail for a number of years. This is an effective and efficient way of distribution. Following the recent acquisition of the Modern.gov software system, an App is available on Apple and Android which allows agendas, minutes and reports to be automatically downloaded direct to an individual's Tablet computer. The user would simply need to choose preferences and everything else is done by the App. This system means that once downloaded they sit on the Tablet without the need for any connection at the meeting.

2.2 Technology appears to be the answer to many issues; however Councillor, Officers and the Public often favour a hard copy over an electronic copy. Presumably, this is due to the fact that it is easier to make notes on a hard copy whereas it can be complicated to make notes on electronic versions. There are software solutions available for this.

3. Options to Consider

3.1 **Option 1** – All Councillors give notice in writing stating that they wish to cease receiving agendas at their home address. The Authority can then cease to continue operating a courier service; and all Councillors will collect their agendas directly from the Civic Centre. Additionally, electronic versions of the agendas will be available online and e-mailed directly to them.

3.2 **Option 2** - The Authority establishes a Voluntary Opt Out System whereby Councillors are encouraged to opt out of the Courier Service; however it is clearly their choice. These Councillors will have their agendas distributed to them electronically; however their hard copy will remain in their pigeon hole until they choose to collect it. *This is the option recommended by the Democratic Services Committee at its meeting on 16 July 2014.*

3.3 **Option 3** - Alternative suggestions to be provided by Council.

4. Equality and Engagement Implications

4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening process took place prior to the consultation period. The outcome indicated that it was low priority and a full report was not required.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 Savings will be achieved by changing the current arrangement.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications other than those set out in the body of the report.

Background Papers: None.

Appendices: None.