



# GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

9 November 2011

# REPORT

**Subject Heading:**

**TRANSFORMATION OF SERVICE  
DELIVERY – moving to electronic  
delivery of Council, Cabinet and  
Committee agendas and reports**

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**Policy context:**

Improving the decision making process as  
part of the transformation of the Council's  
service delivery arrangements

**Financial summary:**

Savings will be generated through  
changes that also aim to improve  
decision-making.

**The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives**

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Clean, safe and green borough  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Excellence in education and learning                                 | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Value and enhance the life of every individual                       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

## SUMMARY

As part of the broader programme for transforming the delivery of services, Committee Administration now uses Committee Process Management software that has potential to streamline decision-making through the electronic publication of Council, Cabinet and Committee agendas and reports rather than continuing to use mainly paper-based approaches.

This report gives details of progress to date, indicates forthcoming improvements and seeks approval of the strategy for future development.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1 That progress with the transformation of production arrangements for Council, Cabinet and Committee meeting documents be noted.
- 2 That the general roll out of tablet PCs to Members and officers be endorsed, subject to the cost thereof being met from existing budget provision.
- 3 That the Committee Administration & Member Support Manager explore with other services improved means of presenting information to Members, using electronic production of documents and the projection facilities in the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms.
- 4 To **RECOMMEND** to Council that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to adjust the Council' Constitution as necessary to reflect the move from paper-based agenda and report production to primarily website based.

**REPORT DETAIL**

- 1 In parallel with the transformation of service delivery, the production of Council, Cabinet and Committee agendas and Executive Decisions has undergone change, with further changes in the pipeline. The aim has been to move from mainly paper-based production of such documents to electronic production.
- 2 Committee Administration now use *Modern.gov*, Process Management software that simplifies the production of documents for meetings and also acts as the web-host for a number of meeting-related articles and documents, such as those details about Members that must be publicly available. *Modern.gov* has simplified in particular the means of ensuring that relevant and necessary information is placed on the website in a timely fashion.
- 3 Documents produced using *Modern.gov* are particularly "user-friendly" for people who wish to access them on-line during a meeting, using tablet PCs (an iPad or other, similar portable form of PC).
- 4 As part of the spending reductions necessary following national budget changes, Committee Administration is required to make savings: the target has largely been achieved early, partly through the introduction of *Modern.gov*, which has led to increased efficiency within the service by streamlining the process of placing information on the website and simplifying the production of documents.

## **Governance Committee, 9 November 2011**

- 5 To be effective, however, the changes need to be supported by more extensive use of tablet PCs. The rolling out of tablet PCs to Members and senior staff is in hand. Once users have access to tablet PCs, it will be possible to cease providing paper copies to them.
- 6 In addition to reducing (if not eliminating) the need for paper copies, use of tablet PCs will facilitate other improvements in the availability of information – for example, judicious use of links within electronic reports will enable readers to access background information without the need, as at present, to produce lengthy appendices to reports. Large numbers of pages can be accessed simply without the need to carry around bulky (and expensively-produced) bundles of paper.
- 7 For legal reasons, however, a limited number of paper copies will still be required, to enable members of the public who attend meetings to follow the agenda. Even here, however, improvements are possible – hitherto, it has not generally been possible to reproduce coloured images etc within paper copies in an economic manner. This has, on occasion, resulted in charts and other illustrations being unreadable. Given the small print runs mainly required once the bulk of documents are reproduced electronically only, it will be economically viable in future to reproduce colour images.
- 8 Large print runs will still be required on occasion for the use of people attending Council, Cabinet, Regulatory Services Committee and, possibly, Highways Advisory Committee meetings when there are items of major interest.

### **Use of tablet PCs**

- 9 If the strategy outlined above is to succeed, Members and officers attending meetings will need to be able to access documents on-line. As the Town Hall is now Wi-Fi equipped, so that Wi-Fi enabled devices can connect to the internet wirelessly, all that is needed therefore is a laptop PC or a tablet PC with a wireless connection (and most modern devices come with that built in). Their size means that tablet PCs are the more convenient form of device for use during a meeting.
- 10 A number of Members and staff have already been using tablet PCs on a trial basis and the Committee is invited to agree that the roll out of such devices to all Members who require them should now begin. Officers who can demonstrate a business case for having one will also be included in the roll out (usually on the basis that, if they already have a laptop, it will be surrendered for allocation elsewhere).
- 11 Members will be aware that publicity critical of the Council was generated earlier this year over tablet PC use, based on false assumptions about the cost of providing them. Although the retail cost of tablet PCs varies widely, with the average around £400, the Council pays nothing like that. In fact, the current arrangement is that the device is provided at no cost other than a monthly contract price of £25 including mobile telephone connection for data

## Governance Committee, 9 November 2011

transmission. Indeed, the first four months is without charge, so in the initial year the cost is £200 and, thereafter, £300 per annum, per device, including data telephone connection.

- 12 The cost for Members is charged to provision for Members' IT expenses; for officers, the cost is chargeable to relevant service budgets.
- 13 Members and officers are responsible for purchasing any "apps" (applications, or programs) they require that do not come with the device as issued.

### **Use of IT facilities in meeting rooms**

- 14 Members will be aware that the Council Chamber and Committee Rooms are all equipped with projection equipment and internet-capable PCs. Hitherto, no great use has been made of this equipment (apart from at Council and some Cabinet meetings). Integral to the new strategy is the assumption that greater use will in future be made of the equipment as a means of illustrating points in reports etc.

### **Constitutional adjustments**

- 15 Some changes will need to be made of the Council's Constitution, and to the Access to Information rules in particular, to reflect the change in emphasis from paper-based agenda and report production to website-based. Authority is sought for the Monitoring Officer to make the requisite changes.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

### **Financial implications and risks:**

The introduction of *Modern.gov* was funded by the government as part of a project covering a number of London Boroughs, although implementation in Havering was delayed until various technical issues could be resolved.

Use of *Modern.gov* and associated changes, such the roll out to Members and senior officers of tablet PCs (or the like) will substantially reduce the requirement for printed paper copies of Council, Cabinet and Committee papers (though, unless legislation changes, there will always be need for some paper copies).

At present, it has not been possible to quantify the exact savings likely – not least because the general roll out of tablet PCs (etc) has yet to begin – but they are expected ultimately to be at least £10,000 per annum (taking into account the additional cost of tablet PCs), which will accrue to Democratic Services budgets.

At present, the cost per tablet PC per annum is expected to be of the order of £300, including 3G telephony connection charges.

**Legal implications and risks:**

The Council has a legal obligation to make copies of agenda papers available to the public. The relevant legislation predates the development of the internet and modern information technology by many years and is thus based on paper copies.

Until legislation changes – and that is not expected in the foreseeable future – there will continue to be a need for paper copies to be produced, albeit (except for Council, Cabinet and Regulatory Services Committee papers) in small numbers.

The Council's Constitution contains a number of provisions relating to the availability of Committee and other papers that will require adjustment to reflect the changes proposed in this report.

**Human Resources Implications and risks:**

None

**Equalities implications and risks:**

The availability of Council etc agendas by means other than paper will assist people with disabilities or who have other vulnerabilities to gain access to those agendas.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none