COUNCIL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Review of Computer Usage by Members
17th January 2008

Report of Head of Democratic Services and Head of Customer & Information Services

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an opportunity to review computer usage by Members and whether current provision is appropriate for Members' needs.

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

That officers be requested to carry out a survey of Members' views on a range of issues relating to the usage of computers by Members for Council business and report back to this Committee on the results and any recommendations for change.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The initiative to provide Members with laptops commenced in 2003/04 with a pilot project including Cabinet Members and a number of Chairmen. This pilot was reviewed in August 2004 following which the decision to roll the programme out to all Members was confirmed and procedures and support mechanisms were introduced in accordance with the results of the pilot review, including the attached Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) which was signed by all Members with a laptop or using their own PC to access the Council's systems.

1.2 At the same time it had been agreed to purchase a computerised Committee management system to provide all Council meeting documentation and information electronically and this went live in September 2004. The use of the system has grown since the first agenda were produced this way and very few paper copies are now printed. The Forward Plan is also now produced electronically and a wide range of information can be accessed through the 'Modern.Gov' system. Further developments are ongoing both in terms of what is accessible on line and 'behind the scenes' processes for officers preparing reports and monitoring the implementation of decisions.

1.3 Following the elections in May 2007, all Members now have a laptop or 'Netilla' access from their own computer and the Council is fully electronic. Indeed it is intended that this meeting be run on a paperless basis experimentally to see if it will be practical to dispense with printed agenda in future.

2.0 Proposal Details

2.1   Over time since the introduction of the Committee Management System and the provision of laptops, the reliance on electronic communication has increased, with distribution of hard copy information reduced now to once per week and officers being encouraged to provide as much information as possible electronically.

2.2   All new Members signed up to the current AUP following the elections in May 2007 and it would seem an appropriate moment therefore to review how the provision of electronic equipment and the support offered by the Council is working in practice and to consider whether there should be any amendments to the system currently in place.

2.3   It is suggested that the following issues should be considered as part of this review:

- The type of equipment provided
- The Council's policies in relation to the use of the equipment
- The level of technical support provided
- The level and style of training available
- The availability and ease of access to necessary information

3.0   Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

3.1   Option 1 – to confirm the existing arrangements as the most appropriate provision and level of support for Members without further investigation.

3.2   Option 2 – to amend the existing arrangements without further investigation.

3.3   Option 3 – to undertake a review of the existing arrangements. This review can be undertaken in one of several ways or using a combination of the following:

- Questionnaire to all Members
- Group responses following Group discussions
- Consideration by this Committee
- Informal meeting of this Committee with all Members invited.

3.4   Whilst Members of this Committee have first hand knowledge to enable them to take a view on whether options 1 or 2 are appropriate, there are a further 53 Members' views to take into account. Option 3 will provide the necessary evidence to justify either confirmation or amendment of the current arrangements.

4.0   Officers Preferred Option

4.1   The officer preferred option is to undertake a survey of all Members with specific questions relating to the issues listed in 2.3 above and providing an opportunity for any further general comments, with the results of this survey being reported back to this Committee for consideration together with any officer recommendations for changed based on the outcome of the survey. This would not preclude Groups discussing the matter prior to individuals responding.

5.0   Conclusion

5.1   All Members are now provided with a Council laptop or have access to Council systems and with an increasing amount of information now being available via computers, Members are requested to review the Service provided to ensure that they receive what they need to undertake Council business.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT
(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications to this report. The financial implications of any recommendations which result from a review of the current service provision will be included in future reports.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report. The legal implications of any recommendations which result from a review of the current service provision will be included in future reports.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS	**Contact Officer:** Gillian Noall
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MEMBERS' LAPTOP AND COMPUTER USAGE POLICY

This document is to be used s a guideline for managing and implementing email and internet usage for members using Council notebooks or accessing the Council's computer system from their own PC equipment.

The document gives clear guidance about the use of Internet access and email and the reasons for these rules. It is vital that Members read this document carefully. If there is anything a Member does not understand it is their responsibility to ask for an explanation. Once you have read and understood this policy you will be required to formally sign up to the policy and guidelines and ensure that they are adhered to.

It should be borne in mind that this document relates to a particular medium and technology and is not intended to be read in isolation. It should be considered with and complements other Council policy and guidance, in particular the Code of Conduct for Members. If Members have any doubt as to the acceptability or legality of an action, they should consult the Monitoring Officer for advice BEFORE taking any action.

Security

For security reasons it is essential that all Members change their initial password to one which is known only to themselves and to alter this on a regular basis. **Members must not disclose their password to any other individual unless directed by the Monitoring Officer and will be held accountable for any usage under their name and password.**

- You must keep your passwords confidential and safe.
- Do not write your passwords down and change them at least every two months.
- Passwords must be a minimum of six characters in length, a combination of numbers and letters, and must not be something that is easily guessed, such as family names, car registration numbers, dates etc.

Laptops should be stored securely and in particular should not be left in unattended vehicles.

Internet Access and the World Wide Web

The Council needs to achieve a balance whereby it allows Members to make full use of this important resource and to develop appropriate skills and knowledge, but also to introduce safeguards to prevent and detect misuse and effectively manage the risks associated with the internet and email.

Access to the Internet is provided to assist Members and they should not use or try to use a Council internet account or email facility for any of the following purposes:

- Breaking through security controls whether on the Council's equipment or on any other computer system
- Logging onto the Council's internet service under a different person's user name and password
- Intercepting or accessing internet traffic (such as email) not intended for him/or her
- Intentionally accessing or transmitting computer viruses or similar software
- Creating or intentionally accessing, circulating, transmitting, distributing, storing or downloading any material which is offensive, obscene, sexually explicit, indecent, pornographic, racist, sexist, defamatory, libellous, menacing, hateful, incites or depicts violence or describes techniques for criminal or terrorist acts or otherwise represents values which are contrary to Council policy

- Knowingly doing anything which is illegal under English law or the law of any other relevant country
- Political lobbying or private business (including commercial activities)
- Any activities which could cause congestion and disruption of networks or systems
- The use of aliases is not permitted in official activities.

All Members are advised to be careful when using the internet. Liabilities may arise through the creation of contracts, misstatements, defamatory remarks, breach of copyright, the disclosure of protected data and human rights violations. The Council may or may not be vicariously liable for the actions of its Members or the Member may be personally liable.

Members should be aware that they can get connected accidentally to web sites that may contain illegal or offensive material. This can happen by following a link to a site whose content could not have been foreseen. If this occurs Members are advised to disconnect immediately, make a note of the site details and of the operation attempted and inform the Monitoring Officer.

Backup

Members should be aware that the shared areas on the network are regularly backed up by Information Services. Any data held on a PC hard drive (e.g. 'C:\') however is vulnerable to loss or damage and is not backed up centrally.

If you choose to store information on removable media, for example pen drives or CDs, then you are responsible for ensuring that this information is kept safe and backed up.

Virus Protection

Anti-virus software is automatically provided on the Council network and it must not be disabled or switched off.   Anti-virus software is included for all notebooks and this is automatically updated whenever machines connect to the Council's network.

Email is a major source of virus infection, and whilst we take every precaution to try and eliminate the risk of infection, there may be occasions where a new virus manages to get through. You must be aware of this risk and report any unusual emails to the helpdesk immediately.

Downloading Software

You should not install, copy, or download, any unauthorised software, including games, to or from another computer. Information Services will copy software where necessary for authorised use within licence limits. If you are unsure whether your software is authorised contact the Information Services helpdesk.

Some software may be legitimately downloaded from the internet. A list of such software will be maintained by Information Services and published on the intranet.

Emails

- Email communications are not guaranteed to arrive at their destination within a particular time or at all
- Confidential information is not secure unless appropriate encryption is applied to protect it. Users should check carefully the correct reproduction of an email address
- Users must not abuse others even in response to abuse directed at them
- Users must not use email to sexually harass or threaten anyone in any manner
- The inappropriate use of upper case email is generally interpreted as SHOUTING and should be avoided
- Users must not use anonymous mailing services to conceal their identity or falsify emails to make them appear to originate from someone else or provide false information to any internet service
- Users tend to regard email like telephone calls and to be less discreet that in a letter giving rise to significant risk of vicarious liability for defamatory statements. All emails sent via the Council's system will include an official disclaimer to protect the Council's interests
- Users should be aware that sending excessively large emails or attachments can cause problems for the system and in extreme cases cause it to fail.

The Council accepts no responsibility for the security of personal data and it should be noted that all emails stored on the system belong to the Council.

Monitoring

It should be noted that all communications are liable to be monitored and that there shall be no expectation of privacy. Emails that are strictly private should not be received or sent on the Council's system. It should be emphasised however that monitoring is only undertaken for the purposes set out below. Usage of internet and emails may be monitored or recorded by the Council at any time without notice or consent for the following purposes:

- To establish the existence of facts relevant to Council business
- To ascertain compliance with regulatory or self regulatory practices or procedures relevant to Council business
- To ascertain or demonstrate standards which are or ought to be received by persons using the system
- To prevent or detect a crime
- To investigate or detect the unauthorised use of the system
- To ensure the effective operation of the system.

The Council will not use personal information collected through monitoring for purposes other than that for which the monitoring was undertaken unless the information is such that no reasonable Council could ignore it, i.e. it reveals criminal activity.

Notebook and printer support

Summary
This service includes the resolution of all day-to-day problems that might occur with notebooks and printers. It specifically includes the following.

- Providing a Help Desk to handle all calls
- Maintaining all notebooks and printers
- Investigation faults for supplied software.
- Providing access to the Council email and Committee Admin systems and the internet via high speed links where they are available.
- Providing anti-virus software for all notebooks
- Providing secure data storage on the Council network

Help Desk phone - 582103
The Help Desk service is available between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm Monday - Friday to report problems, enquire on progress with previously reported problems and to place requests for advice on IS issues. Calls can also be submitted by voice mail, the intranet or by emailing 'helpdesk@lancaster.gov.uk'.

Hardware Maintenance
- Fixing all major hardware related problems on all notebooks and printers within one working day of the equipment being returned to Information Services
- Where a major problem cannot be fixed within the day, a spare notebook and printer are available.

Software Support
Providing a fault investigation service for all faults found with the supplied software. Resetting the laptop to the standard image if necessary
- Microsoft Office and all subsidiary products (Word, Excel, Access, PowerPoint, etc.)
- Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Microsoft Outlook
- Adobe Acrobat

Communications
- Maintaining access to the Council's network.
- Investigating and resolving communications problems jointly with members through third party suppliers where necessary.

Printers
Each printer is supplied with one cartridge of toner and a ream of A4 of paper. Members wishing to print large volumes should email requests to 'membersservices@lancaster.gov.uk' who will print out their requests at the Lancaster Town Hall and put prints into the pigeonholes. Further supplies of paper or print cartridges can be obtained from Members Services for delivery with the weekly distribution or collection from Lancaster Town Hall.

Use of the Committee Management System
Advice and support on the use of the committee management system can be obtained from Members Services by telephoning 582170

Member's responsibilities

Members are responsible for the following.

1. Logging all problems with the Help Desk as soon as possible. The Help Desk should be provided with any additional information requested to help them solve a problem. We will aim to solve many problems using "remote control" software and members will need to remain in phone contact with the Help Desk where this technique is being used and allow remote control of their machines. If problems cannot be solved remotely equipment must be brought to the Old Fire Station.

2. Only using the notebook for the purposes for which it was supplied – i.e. access to the Council's network, using the supplied software and accessing the internet on Council business.

3. To gain approval from IT Services before installing any additional software or deleting any software. Software which is fully licensed and approved can be installed but no support for the software can be provided by IT Services. In the event that such software causes problems IT Services will rebuild the laptop to the standard image.

4. Saving all files etc. on the Councils secure data storage. Any data saved elsewhere e.g. C drive will not be backed up and may be lost permanently.

5. Signing this agreement and the website acceptable use policy (where applicable) and following all corporate policies on security, email access etc.

6. Ensuring that equipment is used safely and in accordance with manufacturer's guidelines

7. Notifying the Help Desk as soon as possible if equipment becomes lost, damaged or stolen. It is the Councillor's responsibility to report any instances of theft to the Police and obtain a crime incident number.

8. Returning any Council owned equipment within 7 days of resigning as a Councillor or failing to be re-elected at the City Council elections.

I agree to abide by the guidelines outlined above :-

Signed …………………………………………….

Print Name ………………………………………..

Date……………………………………………………