

REPORT TO CABINET

REPORT OF: Director of Operational Services

REPORT NO. DOS296

DATE: 7th November 2005

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| TITLE: | Broadband for Members |
| KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL: | Non Key Decision |

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| COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION: | E-Government Councillor Paul Carpenter Portfolio - Technology |
| CORPORATE PRIORITY: | N/A |
| CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS: | N/A |
| FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT IMPLICATIONS: | N/A |

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to make recommendations in respect of the means by which members connect to the Council's IT systems from their own homes. The recent developments in Broadband availability within South Kesteven now provide new opportunities.

Recommendations

2. Based upon the content of this report, the following recommendations are made:
 - a) The authority seriously considers the introduction of Broadband to all Members in order to improve the utilisation and effectiveness of their home working arrangements

- b) A strategy be developed to eliminate the existing duplication of costs in printing and postage of reports as members adopt new working practices
- c) Funding to be provided for a start up programme of Broadband connectivity. These costs will reduce over time but, initially, estimates indicate between £15,000 and £25,000 in year one, reducing to an ongoing annual cost, in the future, of around £10,000, depending on negotiations with suppliers.
- d) Plans to deliver the equivalent savings of approximately £10,000 per annum be drawn up to fund the additional investment.
- e) These proposals are put to consultation with members, specifically the DSP working groups.

Details of Report

3. Background

The move to provide Members with modern home working arrangements introduced lap top computers. The proposals looked to a time when such arrangements would remove the need for the production and postage of Council reports and correspondence etc. In practice, however, this has been hampered by the levels of connectivity between Members' homes and the Council. In comparison, full-blown home-working solutions were considered too expensive. However, the spread of change in the IT and telecom world has now provided Broadband connectivity to many of our councillors which, previously, was simply not available. In addition, costs are significantly lower and continue to fall.

This report looks to ensure the Council keeps up to date with developments and maximises the opportunities now available to it.

Cost Benefit of Broadband

4. If Broadband was to be introduced, the following costs will be incurred, assuming all 58 Members are eventually included:

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| Supplier – ongoing | £14,000 |
| Networking kit (one-off) | <u>£ 6,000</u> |
| | <u>£20,000</u> |

Benefits of Broadband

5. The move to Broadband will become the norm as many existing users now find their experience of the Internet enriched by its use, compared to the sometimes, very frustratingly slow world of traditional analogue telephone modems. The following summarises the benefits of Broadband:

- Improved speed of access and downloading of reports/mail etc
- the ability to deliver larger files such as reports with graphics, photos or mapping information
- reduced user frustration
- support to users should reduce
- member/user buy-in to the new technology and approach increased
- reduced in-house costs. The cost of printing and postage plus associated admin is estimated at between £40,000 and £50,000 per annum
- opportunity to remove the duplication of costs i.e. an invest to save opportunity
- opportunities increased for greater use and functionality such as on-line training for Members (European Computer Driving Licence), managing Members area on the Web
- Overall, shows that the Council is taking a lead and paves the way for greater use by members of the existing investment.

Factors to be Considered

6. The introduction of Broadband will require further operational details to be considered and decisions taken. These are as follows:

a) Availability to existing members

Currently research indicates that of the 58 Members, 39 (67%) can have access with a further 9 being possible ("may be"), indicating that upwards of 80% should, in the very near future have access to such functionality.

b) Location of connectivity within member's property

There may be some requirement for bespoke connectivity to a specific room, although this should be avoided if at all possible. Options utilising wireless connectivity, if high levels of security are required, should also be avoided.

c) Policy in respect of existing users

Some Members already have, as a personal decision, introduced Broadband and others, through their County Council functions. Clarification is needed on how these are to be handled. Equally when Members cease to become Members needs clarification.

d) Preferred method of procurement

Members could organise the procurement and installation themselves, paying the bills with reimbursement through their allowances.

Alternative Options

7. The alternative options to Broadband are as follows:

Option A

Improve the e-mail delivery access problems by ensuring file sizes being delivered are below a certain size. This should already be in place but restricts functionality.

Option B

Produce CD Roms with the Members mail and documents. These would be posted to the Member's address.

This option could be utilised for those not on Broadband links.

Option C

Let Members introduce Broadband as they see fit with an allowance being paid as they adopt its use. The Council would negotiate with and recommend a supplier.

Option D

Introduce more docking stations at Council Offices e.g. Stamford, Bourne and the Deepings for quick updates on files.

Comments of Director of Finance and Strategic Resources

8. The report highlights the potential efficiency benefits from the introduction of Broadband. These will only be realised if operational changes outlined in the report are achieved.

Conclusion

9. Whilst the above alternative options each have some merit, only the general move towards adopting Broadband will deliver all of the benefits identified at paragraph 5.

Ian Yates
Director of Operational Services