MEMBERS' IT WORKING GROUP

Meeting date: 20th October 2005

Members Present: Councillor Bisnauthsing
                  Councillor Howard
                  Councillor Kerr
                  Councillor Moore
                  Councillor Nadarajah
                  Councillor Mrs Woods

Officers Present: Ian Pick
                   Joyce Slater
                   Rebecca Chadwick

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1.   NOTES FROM LAST MEETING

These were noted and approved.

2.   ANALYSIS FROM MEMBERS' SURVEY

Ian Pick circulated an updated analysis of responses to the Councillor Laptop 2005 survey because a few more had been returned. Written responses were also circulated. The response rate was now 73.7% and Ian gave a presentation on the results. The working group was encouraged that 74% members who responded indicated that they used their laptop at least once a week. 4 responders, however, never used their laptop. It was also encouraging that 87% connected to the office network from home. It was suggested that this figure could be increased if more members had broadband access. The working group acknowledged, however, that the 20% who "did not bother" faced a number of issues. Ian informed the group that only 13% used broadband.

A critical factor in members' use of their laptops was the connection response time. Over half said that it was poor or very poor. Members of the group spoke about their personal experience of slow connection time. Ian advised that conversion to the new system would resolve this to a certain extent. Members commented that the conversion of laptops seemed to be taking a long time. Joyce Slater explained this situation and Ian stated that out of the 15 who had not responded to the questionnaire, 7 had been contacted about being converted to the new system leaving 6 who had had no contact. A member suggested that feedback was required on those members who seemed impossible to reach.

Conclusion (1) – to ask the Training Manager to provide a laptop conversion schedule to the working group so that progress can be monitored.

Ian Pick went on to show whom members contacted when they had a problem with their laptop. 3% contacted their IT Buddy, 62% the helpdesk, 22% a particular IT Officer and 13% the Training Manager. It was promising to see that the helpdesk was used the most. Too many members, however, were still contacting a particular officer. The fact that 87% were pleased with the speed of response and 94% pleased with the quality of service from the help desk was evidence that the helpdesk should be used. This was affirmed by the group who went on to discuss how the helpdesk could be promoted. Ian

also emphasised that members should only bring their laptops into the office for system conversion when they are requested to do so.

Conclusion (2) – to recommend that stickers be placed on members' laptops giving the IT helpdesk telephone number.

One member spoke of the difficulties when, living some distance from the Grantham offices, members had far to travel to bring their laptops to Grantham when a problem arose. Joyce Slater reminded the group that members could leave their laptop at an area office to be collected by the courier.

Responses regarding training were considered. Joyce stated that member guidance notes had been completed for using modern.gov and were being checked by a Portfolio Holder. Cllr Nadarajah added that using modern.gov would feature in the E-Government Working Group's presentation at the next Council meeting. Satisfaction with training was high but 23% were unable to attend training offered to them. There had been significant wastage as a result of this. Joyce explained that training provided in the community had been encouraged and funded but places were limited. One member stated that local training, from his experience, had been too advanced and that he needed basic training specific to using his laptop. This was reiterated by the other members who went on to discuss the suggestion at the previous working group meeting that a CDROM be provided with a video of how to complete certain things on the laptop.

The group discussed various issues raised in the presentation: passwords, fingerprint recognition, certificates for laptop identification. In the discussion, a member present who had refused the offer of a laptop, explained that he considered using one to be too time consuming; he, like most other members, already received a significant number of telephone calls. He commented that people in his ward wanted to speak to their Councillor personally, not via email.

The group discussed whether or not members needed paper copies of all agendas and there was a brief discussion on modern.gov. Some members suggested that they could receive a few more agendas via modern.gov and so it was recommended that all members be asked if they would like to change how they receive their agendas.

Conclusion (3) – Rebecca Chadwick to update member agenda distribution list.

3. **BROADBAND**

As suggested at the previous meeting, Ian had drafted a letter to members regarding Broadband access. A draft copy was circulated and a few minor amendments suggested. One member commented that the Council's website should appear on letterhead. Joyce mentioned that she thought this was something the newly appointed Communications Manager was looking into.

Conclusion (4) – to support the posting of a letter to all members regarding broadband access from their homes.

The members questioned Ian on his understanding of the benefits of broadband access. He stated that it would increase access speed and ease of use.

Rebecca Chadwick reported on the provision of broadband access by Lincolnshire County Council, who had funded a corporate annual contract for members' broadband

access. Rebecca offered to invite a representative from the county to speak to the working group but members suggested that they would be satisfied with just paperwork that had been provided to the county council.

Conclusion (5) – Rebecca Chadwick to investigate further Lincolnshire County Council broadband provision and report back at the next working group meeting.

4. FEEDBACK ON STORAGE IN OUTLOOK

Ian Pick reported on mailbox sizes. With the old system (i.e. copy on server), sending was limited to 57 megabytes but there was no restriction on receiving emails. On the new there were no limits as data was stored locally. A copy, however, was retained on the server for thirty days. With regard to offline folders, Ian stated that if these were not synchronised, they would not be saved on the server. If members wanted to create a subfolder on outlook, they needed to contact ICT.

Ian stressed the need for members to be aware of doing backups, especially as there was no facility for backups on the server for folders. Various backup methods were discussed. Email archiving was currently being looked into.

Conclusion (6) – Ian Pick to report back on backing up sent emails.

5. ENCOURAGING MEMBERS' USE OF ICT

There had been considerable discussion on member training as this, together with broadband access, was seen as a key issue in encouraging members to use their laptops. Various suggestions for training were made:

- o Working group members could assist with training, similar to previous IT Buddies. (Work would be required on improving this system should it continue);
- o One-on-one training, despite the outcome of a previous scrutiny review, and although it was labour intensive, was an effective method of training. Small group training may resolve cost issue;
- o Training should be provided on an individual needs basis;
- o Training for modern.gov should be provided specifically;
- o Training sessions should be arranged to co-ordinate with council/committee meetings on the same day to reduce travelling for members;
- o Training sessions should be no longer than 2 hours;

The working group also considered a report on the cost of printing and posting committee agendas. It was acknowledged that not all expenditure would be reduced, as by law the council was still required to post the meeting summons to members. Costs were still significant and savings could be achieved.

Joyce Slater also gave further information on previous training exercises. Pre-election training had not been so well attended but it was suggested that this would become more relevant as potential members should be aware that they would be expected to use a laptop. Funding had been provided for members to attend local courses. An external trainer had also been used until the trainer had moved away. Appointing a replacement had not been successful as a trainer needs a certain affinity with the type of work undertaken by elected members. Short courses had also been run in a number of formats. Difficulties with these had been attendance and differing abilities preventing progress for some members.

An E-Government requirement was that IT E-learning skills should be provided on the Council's intranet. This was currently being worked on and would eventually provide the European Computer Driving Licence course.

Conclusion (7) – To make the following recommendation to the Engagement DSP:

That training for members on the use of ICT be provided through a structured portfolio of training options to cater for the variety of training needs. This to include:

- o **One-on-one training**
- o **Small groups**
- o **Self study CDROMS with video demonstrations**
- o **IT Buddies (with support)**
- o **Supported learning playdays**
- o **An integrated approach to training e.g. 'laptop month'**

Priority be given to those with most difficulties in using their laptop and new users. Level of previous training will not affect the prioritisation of future training.

Training to be provided, where possible and suitable, on days when committee meetings are scheduled to enable members to attend both in one visit to the council offices.

6. **FEEDBACK ON GOVERNMENT POLICY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TRAINING**

Rebecca Chadwick reported that there was no Government policy that members were required to use laptops and that there was no specific mention of broadband. There was only a general encouragement of members' use of IT through the ODPM National Strategy for Local E-Government. There was currently no external funds for training.

7. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

8th November 2005, 3.00p.m. – Members' Lounge

Agenda items:

- Broadband – to consider LCC provision and form a recommendation
- Further research on why members are reluctant to use laptops
- To form a final set of recommendations on training.
- IP to report back on data storage and backup.
- Cost of sending committee agendas on CD.