



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE - 16TH SEPTEMBER 2015

SUBJECT: PRINTING COSTS FOR MEMBERS

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Democratic Services Committee with the results of a recent survey of members on the current method of distribution of committee papers and agendas and whether changes can be made to address/reduce printing costs.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The budget heading for members printing was reduced as part of the 2014/15 budget proposals, however a reduction in the overall cost of printing has not been achieved. A questionnaire was circulated for Members' views on the subject and to gauge how best to address the issue of reducing printing costs.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Council's support to members is a statutory requirement under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011. 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."

- 3.2 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."

- 3.3 Delivery by electronic means is also acceptable under the legislation.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 Democratic Services has several different functions in its support to members. Monitoring Members' budget and ensuring that budget targets are met is vital to show that efforts are being made to achieve savings throughout the whole Authority.

- 4.2 Overall since 2012, over £115, 000 has been spent on Members printing services.
- 4.3 In 2012, over £34,000 was spent providing all members with Ipads, Laptops or Wyze machines and with providing a broadband connection to each Member's home. All newly elected members are also provided with IT equipment and a broadband connection as and when necessary.
- 4.4 On 27th February 2014, at full Council when considering the MTFP savings, Members agreed to a reduction of the budget identified for printing committee documents in the sum of £15,000. In order to achieve this saving target, the number of printed documents needed to be reduced by approximately 60%. This was to be achieved by reducing the number of hard copy Committee reports and agenda packs produced by limiting the circulation to Members of the relevant committee or working group, with additional copies of each committee agenda and reports etc being made available in the Members group rooms and library.
- 4.5 In addition a weekly email is sent to all Members, which includes the timetable of meetings and a link to the Council's intranet where copies of agendas and reports are published electronically.
- 4.6 During the past year, despite the implementation of the reduced circulation as set out above it was not possible to achieve the planned saving and in fact the Members printing budget was subsequently overspent by over £20,000. It is highly likely that, there will also be a similar overspend on this budget for the current financial year.
- 4.7 Whilst Members appreciate that savings must be made, it has proved to be difficult to find a practical solution. A questionnaire was circulated to all members seeking the views of members on how savings could be made with as little disruption to the services provided to members.
- 4.8 Of the 70 members contacted, only 39 completed and returned the questionnaire (54%), 3 members provided comments but did not return the questionnaire. The percentage of returns is disappointing, however some valuable comments and suggestions were made from those members who took part in the exercise.
- 4.9 Of the 39 Members who provided a response:
- 20 Members stated they would consider reading papers online rather than have printed copies.
 - 14 Members stated they would be prepared to bring their laptop/tablet to a meeting instead of having paper copies of reports. One Member would need time to get used to this.
 - 31 Members were prepared to retain/re-use copies of agendas that go to several committees e.g. Anti Poverty Strategy.
 - 16 Members would be interested in 'read aloud' software which would have the ability to read out reports.
 - 24 Members would be interested in an "app" which would allow the user to download papers to read offline.
 - 23 Members would be interested in software which would enable notes to be made on an online copy of a report
 - 26 Members would be prepared to ONLY receive copies of paperwork for committees they attend and read others online.
 - 23 Members stated they would be prepared to read printed copies of other reports in the members' library or group room.
- 4.10 A review of Scrutiny arrangements is taking place, which will overlap with some of the content this report. Some of the comments and suggestions made in the Printing Questionnaire are more relevant to the Scrutiny review and so will be addressed in a separate report, which is also to be discussed on 16 September 2015.

- 4.11 The general comments received were mixed and full details are shown in the Appendix to this report. Initially, a meeting has been held between Democratic Services Officers and IT Officers to discuss some of the IT issues. As a result of this meeting, it is proposed that a focus group of members is set up to discuss and trial some of the possible solutions to the issues mentioned below, such as improving the Members' portal, the introduction of software to make notes on pdf/online document packs and issues with equipment/training.
- 4.12 Due to the number of responses received it is difficult to get an exact picture of how Members are prepared to address the issue of reducing printing costs. As a starting point, it is recommended that the preferences and issues raised by Members who completed the questionnaire be dealt with initially on a trial basis and that those who indicated that they are willing to access reports online do so for 6 months before a report is brought back to Democratic Services. At Appendix 2, details are set out of other Local Authorities in Wales who use electronic systems or printed systems for sending out Agendas/Reports.
- 4.13 It has already been agreed that Heads of Service and officers below that level will no longer receive printed agenda packs so that the numbers of officers who receive printed committee papers will be reduced from September 2015.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 An EIA screening has been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact has been identified, therefore a full EIA has not been carried out. When providing support to Members, the Head of Democratic Services considers how any individual additional needs or specific requirements can be met. The Council also considers any recommendations from the Diversity in Democracy Group, which is chaired by the WLGA and considers equalities implications of those who may be looking to become Councillors.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The table below shows the actual amount spent on printing since 2012 and the available budget. All other financial implications are stated within the report.

| Printing | Actuals | Budget | Variance |
|----------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 2012-13 | 35,495.51 | 42,139.00 | 6,643.49 |
| 2013-14 | 41,054.17 | 32,139.00 | - 8,915.17 |
| 2014-15 | 38,703.82 | 17,621.00 | - 21,082.82 |
| | 115,253.50 | 91,899.00 | - 23,354.50 |

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific personnel implications arising as a result of this report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

- 8.1 There are no consultation responses, which have not been incorporated into the report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that with effect from September 2015:
- 9.2 The 14 Members who have indicated in the questionnaires that they would be prepared to receive agenda packs online and bring their Ipad/laptop to meetings will be removed from the printing list as a pilot for 6 months.
- 9.3 A focus group of Members is established to consider Members' IT issues. This group will work with officers to make recommendations for improvements based on the additional comments given in response to the questionnaires and will report back their findings to the Democratic Services Committee.
- 9.4 A further report is presented to Democratic services in 6 months time and until then the current system will continue (other than for the 14 Members mentioned at 9.2 above) so that only Members who have membership of a committee or working group will receive printed copies of agenda packs.
- 9.5 Additional copies of each committee agenda and reports etc will continue to be made available in the Members group rooms and library.
- 9.6 The weekly emails to all Members will continue and will include the timetable of meetings and a link to the Council's intranet where copies of agendas and reports are published electronically.
- 9.7 Any requests for further copies of agenda packs or reports will be made to the Interim Head of Democratic Services so that the number of requests can be monitored.

10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To support Members in their role as Councillor and to achieve the required savings.

11. STATUTORY POWER

- 11.1 The Local Government Act 2000.
- 11.2 Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.

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Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Members comments
Appendix 2 Other Local Authorities systems