



COUNCIL – 18TH APRIL 2024

**SUBJECT: SUPPORTING THE WORK OF MEMBERS ELECTRONIC
ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THE USE OF BROADBAND**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CORPORATE
SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a recommendation to Council from the Democratic Services Committee in relation to the use of home broadband by members going forward following its consideration of a report at its meeting on 13th March 2024.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The reports seeks a decision from Council on the recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee regarding the use of home broadband by members.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That Council consider and endorse the following recommendation from the Democratic Services Committee

- 3.1 That all Elected members make use of their personal broadband connections to access e-mails, papers and meetings, as is the case for 67 members currently, and if for any reason Members do not have access to their own broadband, they could be provided with a MiFi device or a SIM enabled laptop.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 To ensure the Council's elected Members continue to be provided with the appropriate support and resources to effectively fulfil their duties.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 A copy of the report presented to Democratic Services Committee on 13th March 2024 is included as a background paper to this report.

5.2 Council will note that the Democratic Services Committee was asked to consider the following options:-

- (a) Members recommend to full Council that all Elected members make use of their personal broadband connections to access e-mails, papers and meetings, as is the case for 64 members currently.
- (b) Members recommend to full Council that all Elected members are offered a payment of £25 per month (before tax and national insurance deductions) as a contribution towards the cost of home broadband. Under HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rules, the proposed allowance shall be subject to Tax and National Insurance deductions.

5.3 Since the consideration of the report by the Democratic Services Committee 67 out of 69 members now use their home broadband and this number has been reflected in the recommendation at paragraph 3.1.

5.4 A member moved recommendation 5.2 (a) with the additional wording as set out in paragraph 3.1 which was supported by the majority present.

5.5 **Conclusion**

The Independent Remuneration Panel for Wales recommend that councils through the Democratic Services Committee, must ensure that all its elected members are given as much support as is necessary to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. All elected members should be provided with adequate telephone, email and internet facilities giving electronic access to appropriate information. Such support should be without cost to the individual member. Deductions must not be made from members' salaries by the respective authority as a contribution towards the cost of support which the authority has decided necessary for the effectiveness and or efficiency of members.

The Democratic Services Committee considered the report presented and is making the recommendation to Council as set out in paragraph 3.1 of this report.

6. **ASSUMPTIONS**

6.1 The cost of providing a mifi device is approximately £60 with a monthly cost of a SIM in the region of £5. Council will note that this equipment will only be provided if members do not have access to their home broadband.

7. **SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The recommendation set out within the report is based on the principle of all elected Members being treated equally and consistently. As a result, no Equality Impact Assessment is deemed required for the purposes of this report.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 It is anticipated that the take up of the mifi device or sim only laptop will be minimal

and therefore the costs will be kept to a minimum.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications arising from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 The report has been circulated to the consultees below and the responses have been included within the report.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Local Government Act 2000, Local Government Wales Measure 2011, Local Government (Democracy) (Wales) Act 2013.

Author: Lisa Lane, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Consultees: Dave Street, Deputy Chief Executive
Ed Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Mark S Williams, Corporate Director Economy and Environment
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer
Stephen Harris, Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer
Liz Lucas, Head of Customer and Digital Services
Jonathan James, Digital Infrastructure Manager
Jonathan Evans, Programme Manager
Cllr Martyn James, Chair Democratic Services Committee
Cllr Sean Morgan, Leader of Council
Cllr Lindsay Whittle, Leader of Plaid Cymru Group
Cllr Nigel Dix, Leader of the Independent Group

Background paper

Report to Democratic Services Committed 13th March 2024 – Supporting the Work of Members Electronic Access to Information and the Use of Broadband