

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Tenant Scrutiny Board

Date: 6th April 2016

Subject: Mobile Working for Housing Management Officers

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1.0 Summary of main issues

- 1.1 At the Board's meeting of October 2015 an update was provided on a pilot scheme to introduce mobile working for Housing Officers, following recommendations made by Tenant Scrutiny Board, as part of its Annual Home Visit Inquiry.
- 1.2 It was noted that a report was to be submitted to the Senior Leadership team with a view to rolling out the selected mobile solution to all Housing Officers before the end of the current financial year.
- 1.3 The pilot identified a number of positive outcomes for staff including the ability to run more effective surgeries on estates, resolve tenant enquiries in their homes, completing issues at the first point of contact, and further time saving benefits have been seen through Housing Officers no longer needing to obtain information in the office before working on our estates.
- 1.4 Issues were raised during testing of the tablets by officers around connectivity to the mobile network which had an impact on the practical use of the devices.
- 1.5 With current technology, this was felt an insurmountable issue at present and as a result a decision was made to move away from tablets to small laptops.
- 1.6 To resolve the issue of a reliable signal, a MiFi unit will be used. MiFi units are compact, wireless devices that enable multiple users to share a single mobile broadband connection while Officers are on site. MiFis work by creating a localised signal, like wireless routers used for home broadband.

- 1.7 A MiFi unit works by tapping into 3G or 4G mobile phone networks and using this connection to create a mini wireless broadband cloud. This can be shared between mobile internet-enabled devices, such as mobile phones and laptops that are within range of its signal.
- 1.8 MiFi offers advantages over dongles in that they do not need to be plugged in to the device they are connecting to the internet. This means they can be placed in an optimum position to ensure a good signal, thus allowing users to overcome some of the problems associated with using a dongle.
- 1.9 Although the decision has been taken to move away from tablet based devices, this does not impact on the overall scope of the project to provide a mobile working solution for officers and the benefits this brings.
- 1.10 Staff will be provided with a backpack to carry both the laptop and Mifi unit in. They will initially be rolled out to the centralised Income team who are working on Universal Credit.
- 1.11 The devices will then progress to Housing Office staff on a prioritisation basis starting with the relocation of staff to the Community HUBS. A rolling programme of the devices will take place during 2016.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is requested to;
 - (i) Note the contents of this report and progress made to roll out mobile working across Housing Management.
 - (ii) Note that the move from tablet based devices to small laptops does not impact on the overall original benefits from mobile working.

3.0 Background documents¹

- 3.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.