

**Report of City Solicitor**

**Report to Member Management Committee**

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018**

**Subject: Printed Agendas – Options for budget savings and reduction in environmental impacts**

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 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Member Management Committee options to reduce the cost of printed agenda distribution and the associated environmental impact and seek support for progressing plans to further substantially reduce the reliance on printed agenda papers.

**2 Background information**

- 2.1 Over recent years substantial savings have been achieved by reducing cost of the print run of agendas (this being achieved by radically cutting back on distribution) from a peak spend in 2009-10 of £120K to a fairly static annual total print cost over the last number of years of £65k-70k per annum.
- 2.2 Elected Members receive printed agenda copies for all formal meetings of full Council and to meetings of committees that they are ‘summoned’ to as a Member or substitute Member. A small number of Members (cross party) have chosen to receive their papers electronically.
- 2.3 In addition some Members receive copies of printed agendas for Committee meetings that they are not appointed to but for which they retain an interest due to their other roles on the Council – e.g. as a Member of the Executive, Opposition Spokesperson or Scrutiny Chair. Coupled with printed agendas provided to Officers for these meetings this amounts to a cost of around £15k per annum.

2.4 Recent benchmarking of arrangements with Core Cities authorities indicate that Leeds City Council is the remaining authority in the Core City group without plans to move to wholly electronic agenda distribution - see table 1.

2.5 Table 1 Responses from Core City Authorities.

	LEEDS	BIRMINGHAM	NOTTINGHAM	MANCHESTER	NEWCASTLE	BRISTOL	LIVERPOOL
PAPER COPIES TO OFFICERS	✓						✓
PAPER COPIES TO MEMBERS	✓	✓		✓			✓
ELECTRONIC ONLY			✓		✓	✓	

2.6 Those authorities who currently provided paper copies have all expressed an intention to move to an entirely paperless system at some point in the next year with Birmingham set to achieve this by the end of the Municipal Year. All Council's provide Members with tablets or laptops, to ensure they had access to electronic versions of agendas and minutes.

2.7 In addition to print cost, Leeds City Council incurs other internal costs relating to pre dispatch administration and van delivery. These costs have yet to be quantified but could be substantially reduced or potentially completely eliminated.

2.8 Aside from physically printed agendas, all agendas and minutes are published and accessible from the Council's website. In addition substantial development has been undertaken by Modern.gov, the Council's committee management system provider, of an App to enable access to Committee papers.

2.9 Features of the App include; tailored committee circulation (users in effect subscribe to committees of interest), annotations (free text, highlighting and typed comments), text search, agenda bookmarking and quick navigation tools.

2.10 On election, all Members are provided with either a laptop or tablet device to support them in their elected duties.

### 3 Main issues

3.1 Using the electronic communication improvements now available, further opportunities now to significantly reduce the financial cost of the production and distribution of printed agendas.

3.2 Members' views are sought on progressing the following proposals during the remainder of the 2018-19 financial year with a view for savings to be incorporated into budget proposals for 2019-20 to be considered by full Council in February 2019.

- 3.2.1 **Stop circulation of Printed Agenda Packs to non-committee Members.** Stopping the provision of printed agenda packs to non-committee Members (and to Officers) will save in the region £10-15k per annum. Discussions have already commenced with Corporate Leadership Team to move towards paper free agenda circulation for officers during this Municipal Year.
- 3.2.2 For those non committee Members who will lose access to a printed agenda, it is proposed that 1:1 training be provided to those Members on accessing agenda packs electronically (by laptop or tablet device).
- 3.2.3 In addition, to ease transition, it is proposed that a single printed agenda be placed in each group office for Member reference purposes. These agendas will also include any exempt information not readily available currently through electronic means.
- 3.2.4 **Request support from Members to receive Full Council agendas by electronic means only.** Members of committees have the right to stipulate how and where their Summons for a formal meeting is provided to them (see paragraph 4.5.2). The proposals set out in this report are in no way intended to limit Members rights in this respect<sup>1</sup>. Stopping all printed agenda papers for Full Council will generate in the region of £6.5k per annum.
- 3.2.5 Member Management Committee's support is sought on progressing this with a view to securing agreement from as many Members as possible to receive their Council agenda papers in an electronic format rather than paper<sup>2</sup>. Again it is proposed that this be progressed on the basis that training will be provided to all Members (on a 1:1 basis if needed) to support that transition and that a printed agenda be placed in each Group Office for Member reference purposes. Should the circulation of exempt information be necessary to Members in relation to matters for consideration at full Council - this will be provided in hard copy format.
- 3.3 In addition to these proposals, Member Management Committee's view is sought on whether a longer term ambition should be progressed with Members to move (as other Core Cities are or have) to paper-free distribution of agendas. This could – if adopted generate up to £65k savings per annum plus other, as yet unqualified, savings arising from print distribution.
- 3.4 Member Management Committee is also asked to note that the Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) intends to seek her committee's commitment to trial the paper-free agendas for her Board for the remainder of the municipal year. The Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board has also given the same undertaking.

---

<sup>1</sup> Should individual Members' preference be to continue with hard copy printed agenda packs these will continue to be provided.

<sup>2</sup> A printed order paper will continue to be provided for each Member in the Council Chamber.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Most Core Cities have reported that to gain support to move to paperless system has involved a staged process - starting by only sending paper copies to Members of committees and subsequently moving only to providing electronic copies.
- 4.1.2 The Executive Member for Resources and Sustainability, the Chief Whip, the Director of Resources and Housing and the City Solicitor have been consulted on the proposals contained in this report and they are supportive of them.
- 4.1.3 All other political group whips have been consulted with the Conservative Group Whip advising that he broadly supportive of the proposals. The Whip of the Morley Borough Independent Group has communicated his view that printed agenda copies of any committee business should be provided to Members if that is their wish. This report confirms that where a Member is an appointed or substitute Member of a committee, that Member's preference to receive hard copy printed agenda packs will continue.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 There are no equality and diversity or cohesion and integration issues arising from this report – committee Members will continue to be able to access agenda packs in a paper format if that is their wish.

### **4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

- 4.3.1 There are no specific implications for council policy in relation to this report, however reducing the number of printed agendas will support the Council's environmental policy objectives by reducing the Council's use of paper, toner, and electricity. Environmental savings will also be accrued by reducing the number of vehicle movements in the City arising from the delivery of agendas to Members' homes.

### **4.4 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.4.1 If progressed the proposals set out in this report could generate £15-23k per annum in 2019-20 and, if all print agendas were distributed electronically this could generate up to £65k savings per annum plus other as yet unqualified savings arising from print distribution.
- 4.4.2 In addition to the print costs, the cost of the distribution of printed agendas to Members' homes amounts to a further £21k per annum.

### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 Schedule 12 to the Local Government Act 1972(2) (meetings and proceedings of local authorities), in paragraph 4 (principal councils), at sub-paragraph (1A), states that Five clear days at least before a meeting of a principal council in England —

(a) notice of the time and place of the intended meeting shall be published at the council's offices and, where the meeting is called by members of the council, the notice shall be signed by those members and shall specify the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting; and

(b) a summons to attend the meeting, specifying the business proposed to be transacted at the meeting, and authenticated by the proper officer of the council, shall be sent to every member of the council by an appropriate method.

4.5.2 At sub-paragraph (1B) the Act States - In sub-paragraph (1A) "the reference to sending the summons to a member by an appropriate method is to —

(i) leaving it at, or sending it by post to, the member's usual place of residence, or

(ii) where the member has specified an address other than the member's usual place of residence, leaving it at, or sending it by post to, that different address, or

(iii) where the member has given consent for the summons to be transmitted in electronic form to a particular electronic address (and consent has not been withdrawn), sending it in electronic form to that address.

4.5.3 Given that the alternative arrangements proposed in this report have general implications for Members it is appropriate to seek a view in the first instance from Members before determining how a this matter should be progressed. The terms of reference for Member Management Committee include a function "to act as an Advisory Body for the purposes of implementing practices and procedures affecting Elected Members."

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 There are no significant risks arising from this report, however should Members opt to access their agendas via electronic means, access to those documents will inevitably rely on the robustness of the ICT infrastructure.

4.6.2 Those Members choosing to access documents via the App will be able to download agenda documents to their tablet device in advance of the meeting. However Members accessing their agenda documents at meetings via a laptop device will be reliant on accessing to the document via Leeds.gov.uk.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 Given recent developments in ICT (particularly the availability of App based technology through tablet devices) it is appropriate to review current practices for the distribution of agendas to Members.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Members are requested to agree to the proposals set out at paragraph 3.2 and advise whether a longer term ambition should be progressed with Members to move to paper-free distribution of agendas.

## **7 Background Documents**

7.1 None.