

## **HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Report To:** Cabinet  
18 March 2014

**From:** Scrutiny Committee 1

**Subject:** **POLICY REVIEW – INTRODUCTION OF PAPERLESS WORKING WITHIN THE COUNCIL – FINAL REPORT**

All Wards

---

### **1.0 SUMMARY:**

1.1 Between July 2013 and January 2014 the Committee undertook a review regarding the Introduction of Paperless Working within the Council. This report sets out the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

### **2.0 INTRODUCTION:**

2.1 Paperless Working within the Council was regarded as an appropriate topic for review because of the emerging use of tablet technology within the Local Government Sector and the potential efficiencies generated from the use of such technology.

2.2 The Committee as a whole undertook the review and the terms of reference were:-

To examine:

- the appropriateness of Council Members moving towards a paperless working environment;
- how the Council currently engages with external stakeholders and how this can be improved upon in a paperless manner, i.e. information on the website, etc;
- how secure the current forms of information provision are and how this can be improved upon;
- the technology that is available to facilitate such improvements;
- the methods of archiving information both electronically and paper.

2.3 The following evidence, arranged through the Enabling Officer, was provided at meetings of the Committee:

2 July 2013

- Agreed Project Plan

19 November 2013

- Evidence gathering

24 September 2013

- Evidence gathering

7 January 2014

- Concluded review

15 October 2013

- Evidence gathering

### **3.0 OTHER EVIDENCE**

3.1 The following witnesses attended meetings of the committee to give evidence:

- Justin Ives, Director of Resources, Hambleton District Council (HDC);
- Helen Kemp, ICT Manager, HDC;
- Sue Seddon, Improvement Manager, HDC;
- Jane Hindhaugh, Committee Team Leader, HDC;
- Councillor Mrs Penny Marsden, Portfolio Holder for HR, Performance, Transport and ICT, Scarborough Borough Council (SBC);
- Jeff Crowe, Support Analyst, ICT Services, SBC;
- Anna Wood, Legal and Democratic Support Assistant, Legal and Democratic Services, SBC;
- Councillor Diane Gallon, Chairman, Easingwold Town Council;
- Claire Armitage, Clerk, Easingwold Town Council;
- Liz Foster, Clerk, Hillside Parish Council;
- Geoff Marron, Clerk, Newby Parish Council.

3.2 A small group of Members also attended a Council meeting at Scarborough Borough Council to see paperless technology in use.

### **4.0 FINDINGS**

4.2 Based on the written and oral evidence presented, the Committee's findings were as follows:

4.2.1 The Committee determined the suitability of Council Members moving to an environment of paperless working by establishing the current methods of dealing with committee documents, examining the technology available to facilitate such a development and considering how secure the current forms of information provision were. It also gave regard to the affect the introduction of paperless working could have on Town and Parish Councils.

4.2.2 The Committee acknowledged that the introduction of paperless working would increase effectiveness, enable information to be accessed more quickly, provide additional security benefits and produce cost savings and to this end the Committee agreed that the introduction should be supported. However there were certain conditions which the Committee wished to stipulate.

4.2.3 The Committee recognised that introducing paperless working would mean a fundamental change to the way in which Members accessed information and acknowledged that Cabinet Members were already in the process of trialling tablet technology. The Committee was therefore of the opinion that the introduction should be undertaken in a phased approach; but were somewhat disappointed that the decision to roll out the trial of Ipads further to Committee Chairmen, Vice Chairman and members of the ICT Member Working Group had been taken prior to the Committee concluding its review.

4.2.4 The Committee was aware that systems could breakdown and were obviously concerned how such events could affect the Council if paperless working was in place. The Committee therefore suggested that suitable back up systems needed to be established, in the event of any such failure.

4.2.5 The Committee expressed concern about the functionality of the website but acknowledged that a review was currently underway and suggested that the review should ensure that the website could facilitate paperless working for Members.

- 4.2.6 The Committee established that training would be provided to all Members on the use of any technology associated with a move to a paperless working environment and that the cost of such training would not be excessive. The Committee recognised the importance of such training and appreciated that individual needs should be identified, it was therefore suggested that any training should be carried out in a staged approach.
- 4.2.7 The Committee considered the provision of paper copies of documents following the introduction of paperless working and determined how other authorities dealt with this issue. It also gave regard to the legal requirements to provide committee documents to both Council Members and members of the public, and considered how documents could be relayed electronically on a screen at meetings. It was therefore suggested that paper copies should still be provided on a request basis and that consideration should be given to the use of a screen to relay agendas at meetings.
- 4.2.8 The Committee welcomed the input of Town and Parish Councils and determined the wide range of capabilities and facilities available to each. Some Councils dealt with most information electronically where as others did not communicate electronically at all. The Committee therefore agreed that Town and Parish Councils should be supported to operate as they chose.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS:**

- 5.1 From the evidence received the Committee concluded that the introduction of paperless working within the Council should be supported subject to certain provisions.
- 5.2 The Committee considered that the introduction of paperless working should be undertaken in a staged approach.
- 5.3 The Committee expressed concern about adequate back up being in place in the event of system failure and requested assurance that the review of the website would facilitate paperless working for Members.
- 5.4 Members recognised the importance of adequate training provision and suggested that this should be carried out in a phased approach.
- 5.5 The Committee considered the legal position with regard to the provision of hard copies of agendas and reports for meetings and wished to maintain the facility to request hard copies as desired. Members also suggested that consideration should be given to the use of a screen to relay agendas at meetings.
- 5.6 The Committee also recognised the affect the introduction of paperless working could have on Town and Parish Councils and considered that they should be supported to operate as they decided.

## **6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 6.1 To recommend to Cabinet that the introduction of paperless working within the Council be supported subject to:
- the introduction being undertaken in a staged approach;
  - adequate back up being in place in the event of system failure;
  - the review of the website ensuring that it can facilitate paperless working for Members;

- adequate training being provided in a phased manner;
- the provision of hard copies being maintained on a request basis;
- consideration being given to the use of a screen to relay the agenda at meetings; and
- Town/Parish Councils being supported to operate as they decide.

COUNCILLOR A P WAKE  
CHAIRMAN

Background Papers:           None

Author ref:                     JPH

Contact:                       Jane Hindhaugh  
                                      Committee Team Leader  
                                      Direct Line: 767016

180314 Scrutiny 1 paperless working