



Legal and Democratic Services

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TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

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SH/

30 November 2004

Dear Member

EXECUTIVE – 6 DECEMBER 2004

Further to my letter dated 26 November 2004, I attach a copy of a Minute Excerpt from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 25 November 2004 dealing with the call-in on Broadband for Members (Agenda Item A.11 refers).

Yours sincerely

J M. Egan, LLB

Head of Legal and Democratic Services

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2004**

CROS.178/04 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

Councillors Mrs Prest, Joscelyne and Jefferson had called in for scrutiny Executive Decision EX.223/04 dealing with Broadband for Members.

The decision in EX.223/04 was that Broadband for Members be considered as part of the 2005/06 Budget process.

The reasons given by the Members for the call-in were –

1. That the Executive's envisaged criteria by which Broadband may be offered to Members be explained;
2. That detailed comparison costs be put forward; and
3. Any pilot scheme be commenced as soon as possible prior to the Budget process and the participants should be ordinary Members of the Council.

Copies of the following documentation had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting –

- Minute Excerpt EX.223/04 (circulated at Agenda item A.4)
- Minute Excerpt EX.188/04 and report of the Head of Customer and Information Services CIS.02/04 which had been considered by the Committee at its meeting on 14 October 2004 (by way of background information).

A Member began by commending the Executive for its forward looking decision that broadband for Members be considered as part of the 2005/06 Budget process.

He then outlined in detail the reasons for the call-in. Although the proposed pilot scheme, which would allow feedback prior to broadband being extended to the remainder of the Council was welcomed, it was restricted and did not take into account back bench Members who made great use of their computers and needed a better service to fulfil their constituency roles. He also pointed out that broadband would not solve the problems that some Members had been experiencing with their IT equipment.

The Member calculated the cost of including additional Members to the pilot to be approximately £300 per Member.

Another Member requested clarification of the costs involved in the provision of broadband, the current Budget for Members' IT Service and why the pilot could not commence now.

In response the Head of Customer and Information Services indicated that the cost would be £240 per annum, plus £50 per annum anti-virus, making a total of around £300 per Member per year (that being an annual cost). He further confirmed that an Officer had raised the matter at the Independent Remuneration Panel, and the Panel had indicated that it wished to see the outcome of the pilot scheme, including associated costs, before considering rolling out the programme to additional Members. There would not be any cost to Members taking part in the pilot scheme. He undertook to provide a written response as regards the budget for IT.

Various Members then commented that the pilot should include a cross-section of Council Members and should be commenced as soon as possible.

In response, the Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder explained that as a result of her research costs were variable.

The criteria used in recommending people for the proposed pilot was done on perceived usage, i.e. those persons who downloaded large documents and amounts of information on a regular basis were the people who did most work in the building (as opposed to in Wards). She considered that the pilot would be done fairly if offered to Executive Members, Leaders of Political Groups and Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. That would also ensure cross-Party input. However, if the Committee could justify differing criteria then she would be happy to look at that.

Referring to the costs, the Portfolio Holder stated that other Local Authorities within the County were looking at the provision of broadband for their Members. Allerdale had undertaken a 4 Member pilot, Eden a pilot consisting of 5 Members out of 36. That cost £129 per annum, £420 line rental and approximately £160 per annum call charges dependant upon usage.

By way of background information the Portfolio Holder commented that broadband was part of the Government's national E-Government Strategy and it was a priority for the Council to look at supporting new ways of working e.g. at home or away from the office base, on line, e-mail, teleworking, and access to remote working for all staff who satisfied the Home Working Policy.

The Portfolio Holder then made reference to The Cumbria Broadband Initiative, a scheme to link all Councils in Cumbria, the plan being to enable broadband connection to be available by the Summer of 2005. She was committed to the provision of broadband to Members, but it required to be done in the best possible way.

Many Members had broadband connection in their homes, paid for by themselves. They would, however, have security problems in linking into the system of the Authority and work was ongoing to overcome those.

Northumbria County Council had all Members on broadband without having undertaken a pilot scheme. That had been done over a period of time as broadband became available in their area and had now been running for two years. On the information available it was cost effective - £500 per annum per Member and £9,000 to create a central base.

Mr Nutley stressed that undertaking a pilot was about using a small group to test it and iron out problems before the programme was launched. If the pilot was extended, as suggested, to say 15 Members then it would be necessary to manage those 15 with all the associated problems. That would result in a more difficult larger scale exercise.

The Portfolio Holder added that research showed that other Local Authorities had used 4/5 Members in such pilots.

A Member stressed the importance of the provision of broadband being piloted first of all. The objection was that the Executive was taking up all places on the pilot and there was no room for anyone in the larger Political Groups.

In considering an appropriate way forward the Member moved that the matter be referred back to the Executive as follows –

- (a) The Executive should decide how many places to allocate to the pilot scheme;
- (b) those places to be decided proportionally to the total number of Members on the Council; and
- (c) Political Groups would then nominate their share of the Members.

As regards the timing of the pilot, the Portfolio Holder suggested that it could not start before the Budget bid on broadband had been agreed because, if that bid was unsuccessful, what would be the point of undertaking a pilot.

In response, Members believed that the preliminary work on the provision of broadband could be done and the pilot should commence as soon as possible.

RESOLVED – That the issue of Broadband for Members be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration, together with the comments of this Committee as set out above and the following suggestion -

- (a) The Executive should decide how many places to allocate to the pilot scheme;
- (b) Those places to be decided proportionally to the total number of Members on the Council; and
- (c) Political Groups would then nominate their share of the Members.

**REPORT TO EXECUTIVE &
CORPORATE RESOURCES
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

A11

PORTFOLIO AREA: CORPORATE RESOURCES

| | Executive | Corporate Resources O & S |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Date of Meeting: | 13-Sep-2004 | 14-Oct-2004 |
| Public | | |
| Key Decision: | No | Recorded in Forward Plan: No |
| Inside Policy Framework | | |

Title: **BROADBAND FOR MEMBERS**
Report of: **Head of Customer & Information Services**
Report reference: **CIS02/04 – BROADBAND FOR MEMBERS**

Summary:

This report examines the issues surrounding the providing of broadband to Members

Recommendations:

- 1) That connecting Members to the Council's network via broadband not be progressed.
- 2) That consideration is given to providing Members with broadband access to the internet.

Contact Officer: John Nutley

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

The Customer & Information Services Unit was asked to investigate the possibility of connecting Members to council services using broadband technology.

The introduction of broadband will certainly improve the current on-line service offered to Members. It will enable a faster, more reliable service which will improve the current service and anticipate future demands and requirements. This method of connection is likely to result in greater Member take up and move us towards a situation where business is more likely to be conducted electronically with all the advantages this brings.

In all scenarios because of the current coverage, the provision of broadband will result in a two tier service for Members – with those in broadband enabled areas being able to take advantage of the service whilst others would be restricted to dial-up modem access. Additionally, in both cases the costs will be greater than currently budgeted for and any proposal to proceed will form part of a new budget bid.

There are two distinct approaches that could be taken in connecting Members to council services using broadband

Approach 1

This would involve setting the Members up so that they would be considered as part of an extended Council network. They would be able to access all Council services as though they were in the Civic Centre. Although they would be connected by broadband the speed would still be less than a Civic Centre connection though it would be considerably improved on the current dial-up service.

The business benefits are such that as part of a centrally managed network service it is easier to administer and develop with the Members having the same access to services as staff.

However, for a number of technical reasons, detailed in Appendix A, the introduction of such a service introduces security risks to the Council's network. The extents of these risks are of such significance that we cannot recommend this method of connection for Members.

The cost of connecting Members to the corporate network using broadband in this scenario would cost be £17,500 with an annual revenue cost of £13,480. However, because of this service is "always on" this cost will be offset by the reduction in usage cost of the dial-up modem service. These are estimated at £1,080 p.a., making a nett revenue cost of £12,400

Approach 2

As an alternative the possibility of providing broadband to Members without direct connection to the Council's network has also been considered.

In this scenario a broadband service only to the Internet is provided. Council members would access Council services over the Internet. The Council, along with most organisations, is moving towards providing all of its services online through the Internet. At this moment though not all Council services are provided in this manner. For example, access to Public Folders and Part B reports would not be possible. However, over time, as the programme of web enablement of services takes place these should become available and Members will be able to access the full range of services.

There are also risks in this approach. The chief risk is that the PC's would be outside the control of the Council and any central corporate checks and measures that the Council puts in place to protect both the equipment and the user are no longer available.

The cost to the Council of this solution would be £2,500 with an annual revenue cost of £12,480. However, because of this service is "always on" this cost will be offset by the reduction in usage cost of the dial-up modem service. These are estimated at £1080 p.a., making a nett revenue cost of £ 11,400.

2. CONSULTATION

2.1 Consultation to Date.

2.2 Consultation proposed.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 That connecting Members to the Council's network via broadband not be progressed.
- 2 That consideration is given to providing Members with broadband access to the internet.

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To indicate a Member preference for broadband connection

5. IMPLICATIONS

- Staffing/Resources –
None
- Financial –
- Legal –
None
- Corporate –
- Risk Management –

The adoption of either of these proposals would require a full risk assessment and mitigation strategy

- Equality Issues –
None
- Environmental –
None
- Crime and Disorder –
None

Appendix A

Security

- Increased vulnerability to hacker attacks. Always on nature of broadband and fixed addresses means hackers can consistently return to sites to search for vulnerabilities using tools which are easily available on the Internet. Many broadband users report that their PC's are scanned two to three times every day by hackers looking for vulnerabilities. To overcome these problems a firewall would have to be installed at each Members site at a cost of £250 each. A total cost of £12,500. This would give secure access to the Internet.
- Secure connection to other networks over a public IP network – the internet. To enable this to take place all traffic needs to be carried in a secure method. This is accomplished through using technology known as a Virtual Private Network (VPN). The Council does not yet employ this technology but it is due to be installed as part of the Customer Contact Centre. This is likely to become available in November 2004. Its deployment on all PC's is likely to cost £5,000. To enable a VPN connection Members will require a subscription broadband service to the internet to be set up. A typical BT connection would cost £240 p.a. per Member or £12,480 p.a. in total.
- Assuming that all these defences are in place there is still the possibility that the PC could become insecure through some other method and be used by hackers to connect to the corporate network through a VPN tunnel (U-turn attack). We would have no method of detecting this at the connection would appear to be legitimate. As a minimum some sort of virus detection solution would need to be installed locally on each Member's PC. To ensure that the latest virus's are trapped this would need to be to a subscription service. Typical costs would be £20 p.a. per Member or £1,040 p.a. in total – and would rely on all participants taking the trouble to regularly update their software.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2004

EX.188/04 BROADBAND FOR MEMBERS (Non-Key Decision)

Portfolio Corporate Resources

Subject Matter

To consider a report from the Head of Customer and Information Services (CIS.02/04) examining the issues surrounding the use of broadband to connect Members' PC's to Council services.

The introduction of broadband would improve the current on-line service offered to Members, enabling a faster, more reliable service. This method of connection was likely to result in greater Member take up so that business was more likely to be conducted electronically.

However, because of the current coverage, the provision of broadband would result in a two tier service for Members, with some Members in rural areas still being restricted to dial-up modem access. Additionally, costs would be greater than currently budgeted for and any proposal to proceed would need to form part of a new budget bid.

There were two distinct approaches that could be taken in connecting Members to Council services using broadband –

Approach 1

Setting Members up so that they would be considered as part of an extended Council network, allowing access to all Council services as though they were in the Civic Centre. Although connected by broadband, the speed would still be less than a Civic Centre connection, though it would be a considerable improvement on the current dial-up service.

However, for a number of technical reasons, the introduction of such a service would introduce security risks to the Council's network of such significance that this method of connection could not be recommended for Members.

There would be a net revenue cost of cost of £12,400 to implement Approach 1.

Approach 2

Providing a broadband internet service to Members without direct connection to the Council's network. The Council was moving towards providing all of its services online through the Internet and, over time, as the programme of web enablement of services proceeds, these should become available and Members will be able to access the full range of services.

There were also risks in this approach, chiefly that the PC's would be outside the control of the Council and any central corporate checks and measures that the Council had in place to protect both the equipment and the user would be no longer available.

There would be a net revenue cost of £11,400 to implement Approach 2.

The Executive decided that they initially wished to see a pilot scheme operate to provide broadband access to the internet, where practicable, for Executive Members, Leaders of the Political Groups and Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In response to a question from the Chairman of the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Chairman indicated that, depending on the numbers, consideration could be given to including Vice-Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the pilot scheme.

Summary of options rejected

The option of connecting Members to the Council's network via broadband was rejected.

DECISION

1. That connecting Members to the Council's network via broadband be not progressed.
2. That the Head of Customer and Information Services be requested to conduct a pilot scheme to provide broadband access to the internet, where practicable, for Executive Members, Leaders of the Political Groups and Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
3. That the Head of Customer and Information Services be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Executive with an evaluation of the pilot scheme.

Reasons for Decision

A pilot scheme was considered to be the most appropriate way forward with a view to improving the provision of home computer services for Members.

**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2004**

CROS.150/04 BROADBAND FOR MEMBERS

The Head of Customer and Information Services presented report CIS.02/04 examining the issues surrounding the provision of a broadband service to Members.

Mr Nutley indicated that clearly the introduction of broadband would improve the current on-line service offered to Members. It was likely to result in greater Member take up and would move the Council towards a situation where business was more likely to be conducted electronically with all the advantages that would bring.

However, because of current coverage, the provision of broadband would result in a two tier service for Members, with those in broadband enabled areas being able to take advantage of the service, whilst others would be restricted to dial-up modem access. Additionally, in both cases the costs would be greater than currently budgeted for, with any proposal to proceed requiring to form part of a new Budget bid.

Mr Nutley explained that there were two distinct approaches which could be taken -

Approach 1 – would involve setting Members up as part of an extended Council network, whereby they could access all Council services as though they were in the Civic Centre. Members would be connected by broadband and, although the speed would be less than a Civic Centre connection, it would be considerably better than the current dial-up service.

The business benefits were that, as part of a centrally managed network service, administration and development would be easier with Members having the same access to services as staff.

However, for a number of technical reasons (details of which were provided), the introduction of such a service would pose security risks to the Council's network. The extent of those risks was of such significance that that method of connection for Members could not be recommended.

The cost of connecting Members to the corporate network using broadband in that scenario was £17,500 with an annual revenue cost of £13,480. However, because that service was 'always on' the cost would be offset by the reduction in usage cost of the dial-up modem service. Those were estimated at £1,080 p.a., resulting in a net revenue cost of £12,400.

Approach 2 – would involve the provision of broadband to Members without direct connection to the Council's network, i.e. connection to the Internet only.

That approach also involved risks, the chief risk being that the PCs would be outside the control of the Council, with any central corporate checks and measures employed by the Council to protect both the equipment and the user no longer being available.

The cost of that solution would be £2,500 with an annual revenue cost of £12,480. However, because that service was 'always on' that cost would be offset by the reduction in usage cost of the dial-up modem service. Those were estimated at £1,080 p.a., resulting in a net revenue cost of £11,400.

The matter had been considered by the Executive on 13 September 2004 when it had been decided –

1. That connecting Members to the Council's network via broadband be not progressed.
2. That the Head of Customer and Information Services be requested to conduct a pilot scheme to provide broadband access to the internet, where practicable, for Executive Members, Leaders of the Political Groups and Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
3. That the Head of Customer and Information Services be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of the Executive with an evaluation of the pilot scheme.

In response to questions Mr Nutley advised that, although downloading documentation would not be instantaneous under the pilot scheme, it would be ten times faster than at present. There would also be the capacity to take voice traffic at the same time and therefore Members' telephone lines would not be tied up when downloading information. If an outside supplier was used then subscription costs would be payable. The proposed pilot would run for a period of six months.

Referring to approach 2, a Member asked whether access to public folders and part B reports could not be password protected. Mr Nutley indicated that it would be in future, but that there would be limitations. Ideally a planned upgrade over time was required to avoid further disappointment in the future.

A Member commented that the Council needed to decide whether it wanted an efficient system or not and, if so, then they would have to pay for it.

A Member expressed concern on behalf of back bench Members of the City Council. The proposed pilot would exclude certain Members who made great use of their computers and needed a better service to fulfil their constituency roles. He questioned why the pilot was restricted as detailed above.

Mr Nutley responded that the principle had been adopted when IT was first introduced to Members to ensure that the proposed service was correct before it was rolled out to the remainder of the authority. Members who were part of the pilot would report back and be champions to others.

A Member then suggested that the various Political Groups be approached to nominate a number of Members to take part in the pilot, based on proportionality and those Members who would be best placed to assess the effectiveness of the system.

RESOLVED – That this Committee supports the proposal that a pilot scheme to provide broadband access to the internet be undertaken, but would request that the Executive give further consideration to which Members would be best placed to assess the effectiveness of the system.

EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE HELD ON 8 NOVEMBER 2004

EX.223/04 BROADBAND FOR MEMBERS (Non-Key decision)

Portfolio Corporate Resources

Subject Matter

To consider a reference from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 14 October 2004 (CROS.150/04) commenting on the Executive's decision to conduct a pilot scheme to provide broadband access to the internet, where practicable, for Executive Members, Leaders of the Political Groups and Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had questioned why the pilot was restricted to those specific Members and that it did not take into account back bench Members who made great use of their computers and needed a better service to fulfil their constituency roles. It had been suggested that the various Political Groups be approached to nominate a number of Members to take part in the pilot, based on proportionality and those Members who would be best placed to assess the effectiveness of the system.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the proposal for a pilot scheme but had requested the Executive to give further consideration to which Members would be best placed to assess the effectiveness of the system.

Councillor Geddes, Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder, reported that details of the pilot scheme had been considered by the Member Independent Remuneration Panel. The Panel had indicated that it wished to see the outcome of the pilot scheme before considering rolling out the programme to additional Members.

A bid would be considered as part of the 2005/06 Budget process to extend the scheme to all Members and, if accepted in the Budget process, then the pilot scheme agreed by the Executive would stand.

Summary of options rejected

None

DECISION

That Broadband for Members be considered as part of the 2005/06 Budget process.

Reasons for Decision

To respond to the reference from the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee.