

Provision of ICT to Elected Members	15 March 2016
Corporate Policy and Resources Committee – For Decision	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Innovation and Transformation
Outcome	The Council will continuously examine and introduce ways to provide services in more accessible and efficient ways
Lead Officer	David Wright
Cost: (If applicable)	See options below

1.1 Summary

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council has established a scheme of allowances payable to Members for the shadow period. The scheme provides for the payment of allowances to Councillors on the basis that:

- 1 – The maximum level of basic allowance as determined by the Department of the Environment (DoE) is paid
- 2 – The maximum level of carers allowances as determined by the DoE are paid
- 3 – The maximum level of mileage rates as determined by the DoE are paid
- 4 – Councillors' payments are made on the third last banking day of each month

1.2 Background

There has been some discussion recently regarding the additional payments, equipment, etc. which is being provided/not provided for members with particular reference to the provisions made in other councils. The table and notes below set out what each council provides or does not provide in a number of areas. This table, which was tabled before committee in January, has been reproduced, note that this was prepared by an external body therefore Council cannot guarantee total accuracy.

	Antrim & N'abbey	Ards & N Down	Armagh B & C	Belfast City	Causeway Coast & G	Derry & Strabane	Fermanagh & Omagh	Lisburn & C'reagh	Mid & E Antrim	Mid Ulster	Newry M & D
Broadband	x		x	x		x		x	x		x
Mobiles	x			x							
Smartphones	x			x			x	x	x	x	x
Tablets	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Laptops	x		x	x	x	x					
PCs				x	x	x					
Printers	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x

Additional comments:

Antrim & Newtownabbey BC:

General preference is for laptops rather than PCs

Ards & North Down BC:

Broadband still reimbursed for “legacy” councillors, but not provided for new councillors

Printers were provided for “legacy” councillors, but not provided for new councillors

Tablets have replaced laptops

Broadband reimbursement to be reviewed

Armagh Banbridge & Craigavon DC:

Laptops provided rather than PCs

Belfast City Council:

Members may claim back broadband bill up to £25 a month

Members may choose either laptop or desktop PC

Causeway Coast & Glens BC:

Mobile phone and smartphone for Mayor only

Derry City & Strabane DC	<p>Councillors may choose iPad, laptop or PC, or may buy equipment themselves up to £500, payable on production of receipt</p> <p>Mono-laser printer available to councillors, plus monitored number of cartridges</p> <p>Up to £15 a month allowed for broadband, subject to contract/expenditure details</p> <p>Choice of laptop or tablet for business use</p> <p>PCs & printers in Members' Rooms</p> <p>Printers provided to councillors but not consumables e.g. cartridges</p>
Fermanagh & Omagh DC:	<p>Allowance given towards broadband provision</p> <p>Any chargeable calls on smartphone reclaimed from councillor</p> <p>Microsoft surface tablets</p> <p>A3 printer/scanner/copier provided</p>
Lisburn & Castlereagh CC: Mid & East Antrim	<p>Tablets provided are iPads; laptops replaced by iPads with printers</p> <p>Broadband provision replaced by 3G access for tablets for regular connectivity</p> <p>Mayor has smartphone for access to calls/email/diary at all times</p> <p>3G enabled tablets + Minutepad software for access to Council & Committee resources</p> <p>Printer provided in Members' Room at Civic Headquarters; use of digital media preferred</p>
Mid Ulster DC:	<p>Smartphones only, members provide own SIM</p> <p>Tablets provided are iPads</p> <p>Laptops provided by legacy councils will be maintained</p> <p>Printer only, no cartridges or paper supplied</p>
Newry Mourne & Down	<p>Mobile phones for legacy Newry & Mourne councillors only</p> <p>Smartphones for legacy Newry & Mourne councillors only</p> <p>Members have either iPads or Surface Pros</p> <p>Laptops for legacy Down councillors only</p> <p>PCs were replaced by laptops/ tablets</p>

I have also reproduced below extracts from sections 4 and 9 of the Local Government Circular LG04/2015 – Councillors Allowances Guidance 2015 which sets out what is intended to be covered by the increased basic allowance received by members in the new 11 council regime. The National Association of Councillors (NAC) have asked DoE about the interpretation of these guidelines and it is understood that DoE are to produce some further guidance on which areas individual councils have discretion, at the time of writing this report that additional guidance has not been received.

Section 4 subsection v:

v. The basic allowance is intended to cover incidental costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity, such as the use of their homes, office consumables and cost of mobile phone calls. See Point 9 for details on Councillor Support Services.

Section 9:

i. The Basic Allowance has been increased, in part, to cover office consumables or incidental costs incurred by councillors in their official capacity including the cost of mobile telephone calls.

ii. It is for each council to decide if it needs to provide councillors with any IT or mobile hardware, such as laptops or printers.

iii. It is for each council to decide on the level of support services that it provides such as general secretarial services.

1.3 Other Considerations

In light of the guidance extracts above and in the absence of the further interpretation from DoE it would appear that Council's current level is in line with the current guidelines although as can be seen from the table provided by NAC a number of councils go beyond this. It is for Council to decide what level of provision is made therefore this report examines the services which Councillors are not provided with, namely broadband and mobile/smartphones.

If we look at the provision of phones first, if Council were to provide each councillor with a smartphone the cost would be £10 per month per device equating to an additional annual cost of £4,560 (Mayor and Deputy Mayor already have phones provided therefore 38 additional devices)

The provision of broadband is not as clear cut since the level of broadband that a member may receive will vary greatly according to the location of their home/office, in addition the cost of broadband provision for that reason may vary greatly as well. The question arises as to what level of support do council provide and also the responsibility for the maintenance and support

of 40 individual broadband connections becomes an issue. In order to provide for example a minimum level of service it could be the case that for some Councillors this would be quite cheap whilst for others to provide the same level of service could be technically challenging and quite expensive. If the service were provided on the basis of same cost for all some would have very high levels of service whilst others would be quite low levels of service.

As a suggestion council could provide councillors with a contribution towards whatever broadband service they choose to avail of, this would mean all councillors receive the same support, councillors install their broadband service of choice and these broadband services would be the responsibility of the service provider to the individual member.

The current cost of a standard unlimited BT broadband package is £13 per month therefore the suggested level of provision would be that each member receives £13 per month as contribution towards the broadband service of their own choosing. This would result in an additional cost to council of £6,240 per annum.

1.4 Options

Option 1 – current provision – no additional cost

Option 2 – current provision plus smartphones – additional cost £4,560 per annum

Option 3 – current provision plus broadband – additional cost £6,240 per annum

Option 4 – current provision plus smartphones plus broadband – additional cost £10,800 per annum

1.5 Recommendation

Council direction is sought on which option is implemented with regards ICT provision to members.