

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – TUESDAY JUNE 11TH 2019

Item 9. Transition to a Paperless Council – Proposed schedule of equipment and support

Introduction

The Parish Council has discussed on several recent occasions the need to move to a 'Paperless Office' owing to the fact that the vast (approx. 97%) majority of our communications are now on-line. A case in point is the recent decision by NFNPA to move all its Planning information for Town and Parish Councils to an on line format for communications in both directions. This was the last major area involving Parish Council work where paper was being used, but as of May 2019, no more.

Rationale

The benefits of such a change to a 'Paperless Office' are legion: a clear saving of Clerk RFO time and Parish Council costs in terms of printing, (which could be better spent on other parish work); costs (stationery, printer ink, postage, etc); and equally as important is the environmental gain from not using vast quantities of unnecessary paper. (a very rough estimate of the costs of paper based systems, printing, stationery etc. undertaken in 2017-2018 revealed an approximate cost in Clerk time and materials of just under £2000.00 p.a.) The move will also enable us to consolidate the retention of confidential information in a single system.

Many local councils have already seen the benefit of moving to a "paperless office". New Forest National Park Authority (like New Forest District Council) has switched many paper based functions over to electronic versions and now runs Council Meeting documents all electronically, with Councillors working of tablet computers. Hampshire has used a system for some time and now virtually all its functions are electronic. Nearly all the organisations we subscribe to / receive documents from are issuing them on line. Therefore the case is now compelling and financially directly beneficial.

Provision

With each Parish Councillor having a tablet (a smaller version of a laptop) those electronic documents can be viewed and referred to (at council meetings or elsewhere) without the need for paper versions of the documents. The provision of tablets for councillors would also allow the Council to introduce dedicated council e-mail addresses for each councillor (for example, councillorx@copythorne.org.uk) thus doing away with the need for personal e-mail addresses to be used for e-mail correspondence (this change was recommended by our auditor as "best practice"). Full and secure Internet Banking, with payments made under "Dual Control", will also be possible which will save on Clerk's time and mileage to/from the Bank.

Costs and Specification

In the light of previous discussions on this matter, the 2019/20 budget includes the sum of £2,616, the bulk of which was based on purchasing 8 Apple iPads at a cost of £299 each together with associated annual software costs.

Subsequent discussions with TLC who support our website have indicated that tablets operating on an Android operating system would be a more compatible with the e-mail service already used by the Clerk (parishclerk@copythorne.org.uk). A further benefit of using tablets with an Android operating system is that they are somewhat cheaper to purchase than Apple tablets.

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In terms of cost, The following information was noted from John Lewis website on June 1 2019:

Cost of possible tablet devices, all with 2 year guarantee (no discount for multibuy):

£390	iPad mini 7.9" screen - 2019 spec (iOS 12)	x 7 = £2,730
£285	iPad 9.7" screen - 2018 spec, (iOS 11)	x 7 = £1,995
£200	Samsung Galaxy Tab A 10.1" screen (Android 9.0)	x 7 = £1,400
£200	Lenovo Tab P10 10.1" screen (Android 8.1)	x 7 = £1,400
Plus memory expansion card - circa £25 per tablet		x 7 = £175
Plus Microsoft Office 365 Home software pack - £79.99pa for 5 devices		x 2 = £160
Plus Virus protection software subscription - circa £25pa for 5 devices		x 2 = £50
Plus protective case – estimate £25		x 7 = £140
FIRST YEAR COST (based on Android)		£1,925
ONGOING ANNUAL COST		£210

From the above it can be seen that the likely first year cost of £1,925 is well within the £2,616 that has been budgeted for. Part of this comes from the purchase of tablets with an Android operating system as opposed to an Apple iOS operating system with a further saving from only 7 tablets being purchased as opposed to the budgeted 8 (the Clerk will continue to use a Parish Council provided laptop. Some of the saving against the budgeted sum could be used for any required training on the use of the tablets

The ongoing annual cost for software licences should be covered by a reduction in General Admin costs.

PROPOSAL

- 1. The Council agrees to move to a "Paperless Office" by the acquisition of 7 tablet devices and associated items as detailed above at a cost of circa £1,925 in the first year.**
- 2. The Clerk to arrange for TLC to support the introduction of the tablets by their setting up of seven individual e-mail accounts for the members of the council (no cost as this is part of our existing contract with them).**
- 3. If required part of the budgeted cost of £2,616 be used to support setting up costs and councillor training on tablet use.**

DAVID RIGBY
Clerk/R F O