

Agenda Item No: 10
Report To: Cabinet
Date of Meeting: 11 April 2019
Report Title: Modern.Gov Roll Out and Members IT Scheme Update
Report Author & Job Title: Kirsty Morland – Member Services Officer
Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Shorter
Portfolio Holder for: Finance and IT



Summary: This report details the progress made to date with the Modern.Gov 'Early Adopters Roll Out' to Elected Members and the subsequent revised IT Scheme for Elected Members from 2019. Further, it reports on the involvement of the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee who have monitored progress over the past year.

Key Decision: NO

Significantly Affected Wards: None.

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. Note the progress to date.**
- II. Support the amendments to the Members IT Scheme, including the use of ashford.gov email accounts for all Council business, as set out in Appendix B.**

Policy Overview: The Council's Digital Transformation Strategy is the basis for the Council's services becoming more accessible on-line and encouraging smarter working and one of the main drivers has been the move away from paper agendas.

Financial Implications: Investment in software and hardware will be required throughout this project.

Legal Implications: N/A

Background Papers: Modern.Gov Project Initiation Document

Contact: Kirsty.morland@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233)

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Introduction and Background

1. Historically the Council produced all its Committee agendas and Management Team agendas in hard copy. This amounted to circa £48,000 for printing & postage costs, plus time collating and numbering agendas and circulating and distributing agendas and reports.
2. As part of the Council's digital journey to become more efficient and user friendly, digital based systems were investigated and following on from this a Project Initiation Document (PID) was prepared detailing how to move towards digitising Committee and Management Team agendas and to prove the concept of paperless meetings. The progress on this project has been monitored by the IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee over the past year and further details of their involvement are set out later in this report.
3. The 'Early Adopters' programme was launched in January 2018, with twenty-three Councillors taking part. Of the twenty-three, eighteen were provided with an Apple iPad device by this Council, with the remainder utilising their own or KCC iPad devices. A Modern.Gov facilitated training session was held in January 2018 to familiarise Councillors and relevant Officers with the system. Councillors were also presented with guidance on how to use the iPads from the Council's IT department. Following on from the training session all Councillors involved in the early adopters roll out were provided with a guide on 'How to Use the Modern.Gov App' and were provided with links to iPad user guides that had been produced by Modern.Gov and were hosted on YouTube.
4. Alongside this roll out, Senior Officers were provided with Surface Pro devices and also received guidance on using the Modern.Gov App following on from the training session.
5. The transfer to Modern.Gov as the Council's Committee Management System occurred in late January and all Committee meetings from the 1st February 2018 were published and can be viewed through the Modern.Gov pages on the website and the mobile App. At this point early adopters and Senior Officers ceased receiving Committee Agendas and Minutes in hard copy (with the agreed exception of Planning Committee papers).
6. There were some initial teething problems with the implementation of both the back office systems and the mobile App, however these were fairly minor and resolved swiftly. Feedback was sought at various stages throughout the year

regarding the usability of both the App and the iPad devices. On the whole feedback from Councillors has been positive.

7. As the year progressed Officers knowledge of the back office systems grew and they commenced investigations on how to fully utilise all aspects of the system. A key area captured in the Annual Governance Statement was the use of Modern.Gov for Management Team Agendas and Officer Decisions by the end of 2018. This was achieved and Officers from the Member Services Team continue to provide support to Officers on the use of the system.

Proposal/Current Position

8. The Early Adopters programme has been up and running for 12 months, with those involved in the programme using Modern.Gov at all meetings and many of those choosing not to receive Planning Committee agendas. Comments have been received regarding the flexibility of iPad devices and that Councillors were able to utilise the device to access maps, plans and other information during meetings.
9. Following the Council wide laptop roll out Officers have embraced Modern.Gov and the number of Officers requesting paper copies of agendas has decreased.
10. During the period January 2018 to December 2018 over £10,000 has been saved in the printing budget alone. This does not take into account the reduction in postage or other associated costs. Further savings are anticipated as use of the new system expands.
11. The IT and Digital Transformation Advisory Committee have received regular updates on the progress with Modern.Gov, with the Members of that Committee participating in the 'Early Adopters' programme. The Committee have been clear in their desire to utilise Modern.Gov to its fullest and this target has also been set as part of the Council's Annual Governance Statement. Further, the Committee has given strong support to the proposal for all Councillors to utilise ashford.gov.uk email addresses with effect from May 2019.
12. Work is ongoing on a number of areas, including; utilising Modern.Gov to submit claims and expenses, gifts and hospitality and the display of attendance statistics. The Head of HR and Customer Services has confirmed that electronic payslips can be issued and this will be up and running for May 2019. It should be noted that payslips can only be able to be sent to an ashford.gov.uk email address.
13. As we progress through 2019 thoughts have been directed to the upcoming Election and how to manage the roll out of Modern.Gov and iPad devices to 47 Councillors.

14. A leaflet has been prepared in conjunction with the Council's Governance & Data Protection Officer, which is entitled 'So You Want To Be An Ashford Borough Councillor – Information for Prospective Candidates on Technology', which will provide vital information to prospective candidates on the technology that will be provided should they be elected. This includes information pertaining to the provision of an iPad device, an ashford.gov.uk email address, Modern.Gov and electronic payslips. A copy of this leaflet is contained at Appendix A for information.

Next Steps in Process

15. Devices have been purchased and are being 'built' in advance of the election. It is intended to utilise the devices currently in circulation, which will be required to be returned by Elected Members should they not be re-elected. IT will be installing all devices with 'AirWatch' which will enable devices to be 'wiped' should they be lost or stolen. This will also enable IT to update or add new applications to devices remotely.
16. Following the election all Councillors, whether returning or newly elected, will be given an appointment to meet with Officers from the Member Services and IT Teams to be given their iPad device, sign the Terms of Use Agreement and set up the relevant passwords to ensure the device and contents are secure. These sessions will be between 7th and 15th May.
17. Two training sessions, specifically on Modern.Gov, have been scheduled for 16th May, with one taking place in the afternoon and the other in the evening. This will give all Councillors the opportunity to understand the basics of using Modern.Gov and allow those with daytime commitments to attend a training session in an evening.
18. The Members IT Scheme will require amendment to reflect the changes as detailed within this report and specified at Appendix B. Additionally, the Terms of Use – Ipad Agreement that is required to be signed and adhered to by all Elected Members has been reviewed and updated in light of the changes to the Members IT Scheme. The revised agreement is attached to this report at Appendix C.

Conclusion

19. The Early Adopters programme has been successful and provided Officers with a solid standing point to work from in advance of the election. The cost savings to date have been positive and it is acknowledged that these will be built on as Modern.Gov and paperless agendas are fully embraced.

Portfolio Holder's Views

20. The use of electronic communications for Councillors is way overdue. The provision of a single type of device is both simpler to maintain and train users. Having been one of the early adopters, and being involved in the resolution of initial user issues I fully support this initiative.

Cllr Shorter, Portfolio Holder for Finance and IT.

Contact and Email

Kirsty Morland – Member Services Officer

Kirsty.morland@ashford.gov.uk
01233 330499