

## RECORD OF DECISION MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

**\*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

Any interest to declare/ or conflict and any dispensation granted *N/A*

### **SERVICE DIRECTORATE: CUSTOMERS**

#### **1. DECISION TAKEN**

- 1.1 Approval of capital expenditure of up to £65,000 for the urgent purchase of laptops to facilitate video conferencing for Council/Committee Meetings and other meetings.

#### **2. DECISION TAKER**

- 2.1 Councillor Ian Albert, Executive Member for Finance & IT

#### **3. DATE DECISION TAKEN**

- 3.1 15 April 2020

#### **4. REASON FOR DECISION**

- 4.1 To enable video conferencing to facilitate remote Council Meetings.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 5.1 Laptops are required to provide optimum functionality and to enable Members to continue using their tablets to access papers.
- 5.2 The matter is considered urgent because of a lack of supply of suitable equipment, which is getting worse as there is a high demand for this at the present time due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### **6. CONSULTATION (INCLUDING THE EFFECT ON STAKEHOLDERS, PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC)**

- 6.1 Consultation has taken place with the Leader of the Council, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Chief Executive..

#### **7. FORWARD PLAN**

- 7.1 This decision is a key Executive decision that the Leader of the Council considers to be urgent. It has not been possible to notify the public by including it in the Forward Plan because it is a decision in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was unforeseen. The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been informed and agreed that the decision cannot be deferred.

#### **8. BACKGROUND/ RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1 The Council has the implementation of video conferencing within its IT Strategy for 2020-2025.
- 8.2 The COVID-19 situation, the Government guidance to encourage people to work at home and the suspension of Council/Committee Meetings has led to an urgent need to bring forward this development

- 8.3 New regulations have come into force, which now permit the conducting of Council/Committee Meetings remotely, preferably using video technology but as a minimum, audio technology.
- 8.4 The IT Team has carried out extensive testing of around eight products available on the market.
- 8.5 Following that process, a preferred supplier has been identified.
- 8.6 There is, however, the question of the hardware that is required to ensure that the video and audio output is of sufficient quality to ensure that meetings can be properly conducted and that the confidence of Members and the public in the democratic process is maintained.
- 8.7 This does of course come with the caveat that total 100% quality cannot be guaranteed, not least because this is dependent on broadband access and speed.
- 8.8 The Council needs equipment that best supports the use of video conferencing requiring good quality microphones and video technology.
- 8.9 This is not just a purchase to deal with the current crisis, although the urgency for the purchase is. When the COVID-19 restrictions are eventually lifted, this solution will fulfil that part of the IT Strategy relating to video conferencing but with its implementation brought forward earlier than expected.
- 8.10 There will be considerable benefits of video conferencing post COVID-19, not least being a reduced need to travel to the office for meetings, which could have a significant effect on the Council's carbon footprint, as well as leading to improved efficiency with less travelling time being necessary.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. Section 5.7 of the Financial Regulations States:

*If an urgent or unanticipated capital need arises, this will be dealt with under the urgency powers delegated to the Chief Executive and the proposal then referred to the Cabinet, and then Full Council, at the earliest opportunity. However, the Executive Member for Finance and IT can approve in year changes to the Capital Programme up to a limit of £100,000 per project. Any requests for use of this approval should be made via the Chief Finance Officer.*

- 9.2. This is an Executive Decision taken by the Executive Member for Finance & IT under the powers delegated to him to approve in year changes to the Capital Programme up to a limit of £100,000.
- 9.3 A Single Tender has been approved by the Service Director – Customers, Service Director – Legal & Community and Service Director – Resources in accordance with Section 14 of the Contract Procurement Rules because of the urgency of the purchase.
- 9.4 Section 14.6.5 of the Council's Constitution details the delegation of authority to the Chief Executive. 14.6.5 (a) lists the functions delegated to the Chief Executive and at 14.6.5 (a) (iv) it states:

*In cases of emergency or urgency (where possible in consultation with the Leader of the Council) to carry out any Council or Executive function, power or duty*

- 9.5 Because of the urgency, the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council has agreed this is urgent, therefore 6.3.11(b) of the Constitution 'Call-In and Urgency applies, see footer in respect of call in and urgency.

## **10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 The estimated cost of sixty-five laptops with video and sound cards, wireless keyboards, headsets, licences and case is estimated at around £1,000 per machine. It may be possible to obtain a discounted price for the number of machines that are being ordered.
- 10.2 The Council is of course a regular purchaser of IT equipment and constantly reviews prices set by various suppliers. There is confidence that Internal Systems Limited repeatedly provide very competitive prices and that this price will provide value for money.
- 10.3 There is no specific budget for this, which is why the approval of the Executive Member for Finance & IT is required through this delegated decision.

## **11. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 If the budget is not authorised, there will be a delay in obtaining the equipment resulting in delays in mobilising video conferencing.
- 11.2 Any delay will also put at risk the ability of the supplier to provide the equipment from existing stocks.

## **12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. There are no equalities implications for this report.

## **13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS**

- 13.1 The Social Value Act and "go local" policy do not apply to this decision.

## **14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The Human Resource implications relate to the Council's ability in the short term to enable Officers to support Council/Committee Meetings in a safe environment. There are more long term implications in terms of promoting more homeworking and contact between Officers and Officers and Members.

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1 None

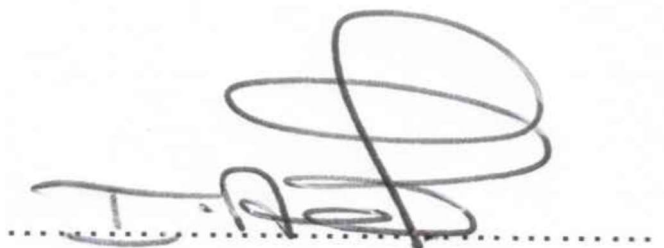
## **15. APPENDICES**

- 15.1 None

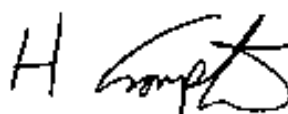
NOTIFICATION DATE

17.4.2020

Signature of Executive Member Decision taker

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. [unclear]', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Date ...15.4.2020.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. [unclear]', written in a cursive style.

Signature of Service Director – Customers:

Call-in does not apply to NON-EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

**In respect of Executive Decisions, as per section 6.3.11(b) of the Constitution ‘Call-In and Urgency’, the call-in procedure does not apply when the decision being taken is urgent. For the purposes of the current Coronavirus pandemic, this decision is considered to be urgent (as normal meetings and the decision-making process cannot take place at this stage). The Chair of Council has been informed and agrees that the decision is a reasonable one in the circumstances and is to be treated as a matter of urgency.**