

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
REPORT**

<p>SUBJECT: Members ICT Options MEETING: Democratic Services Committee DATE: 6 September 2021 DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All</p>
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1. PURPOSE:

To consider the responses to the members ICT survey distributed following the last Democratic Services Committee meeting and consider the options available for councillors for the next term.

2. KEY ISSUES:

In order for a councillor to undertake their role effectively and participate in meetings remotely, it is essential that they are provided with suitable equipment which is capable of handling the many tasks required.

Following the last meeting of the Democratic Services Committee, a survey was sent around to all councillors to identify the key factors they want in the ICT device. Only 10 councillors responded to the survey and a summary of the responses is attached at appendix 1 for information.

In considering the responses to the survey and in discussion with the digital team, the below two devices are considered the most suitable devices for members for the next term.

Microsoft Surface Pro 8

[Surface Pro 8 – The most powerful Pro – Microsoft Surface](#)

At the 2017 elections, members were provided with a Microsoft surface pro 4 tablet. This version is the latest incarnation of the similar touchscreen, tablet device but there are a number of changes and advancements from the tablets currently in use.

The current surface pro 4 has a 12” screen. The new model has a larger 13” screen and less unused space around the screen so it maximises its screen space in relation to its size. The weight of the device is 891 grams.

The general technical spec of the latest surface pro is much higher than the current version members have as well. For example, the new version has 32gb of RAM compared to the current surface pro 4 which has 8gb. Microsoft Teams uses quite a lot of this to operate compared to other platforms so the user experience with teams should be improved.

Downside of this device is that it is still a tablet and some members prefer a laptop. Additionally, some of the connections on the latest version will be different to the surface pro 4 such as moving away from USB to USB-C connections.

A positive with the surface pro model is that in the majority of cases, the tablet has remained effective and suitable for the whole term of Council with very few replacements needed.

Cost – approx. £950

Microsoft Surface Go Laptop

[New Lightweight Surface Laptop Go – The Everyday, Everywhere Laptop – Microsoft Surface](#)

This is the laptop equivalent of the surface pro and is a laptop version of the tablet. It still has a touchscreen but is built into a laptop case, that pushes the weight of the device to 1,110 grams.

The screen size is 12.4” so smaller than the latest surface pro device but slightly bigger than the current surface pro model.

The performance of the surface go laptop is not as good as the surface pro 8. Maximum RAM as highlighted above is 8gb compared to 32gb on the surface pro which will allow members to run everything at the outset but may not be sufficient to last the term of Council.

It does however have more connections and similar connections to the surface pro now included a USB and USB-C connector rather than just one type.

Cost – approx. £826.79

Members have requested to have a choice of device between a laptop or a tablet (surface pro) type device. In terms of choices these would be the two options available to councillors as a laptop device and a tablet device. Members need to consider the performance difference between the two models and whether additional costs will be needed during the term of the Council should the lesser performing model need replacing to keep pace with new technologies.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Option 1 – Offer members a choice between the two devices

This option would offer members a choice between a laptop device and a tablet device to undertake their council duties on and satisfy the request from members to have that option. As noted above however, the performance difference between the models should be noted and if the laptop performance is unable to keep up to date with technological changes during the term then further investment in newer devices mid term might be needed or members will start to notice a performance drop off, that could impact on them carrying out their role.

Consideration would also need to be given to the new councillors elected to the Council in May 2022. In order to have the devices in time for the election, the order will need to be placed by the end of 2021 and those new councillors will therefore not have a choice of device compared to returning councillors.

Option 2 – Offer a single type of device to members and if so which one?

All members to be given one of the above devices to use following the election. Members should consider which device would be the most appropriate to offer to all members taking account of the performance and operational advantages/disadvantages of both devices.

Consideration should also be given to the procurement of the devices. There is a long lead in time for delivery of ICT equipment, hence the need to have the order placed relatively soon to have the devices in time for the election. It may be more beneficial to order one single type of device rather than risk having one delivered on time but not the other.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

A budget of £85,000 has been reserved to allow for an ICT refresh of councillor ICT devices which should last the full term of the Council.

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

The survey will ensure that all members regardless of skills and capabilities will be able to utilise and have access to ICT to undertake their role as councillor.

5. SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS:

None.

6. AUTHOR:

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Appendix 1 – Responses to ICT Survey

Question 1

Do you often travel and work from different locations?

Yes – 6

No – 4

Question 2

Is your preference to have a bigger laptop or a light weight device?

Big screen - 4

Lighter device - 6

Question 3

Do you find using a touchscreen beneficial in your role?

No – 3

Yes – 7

Question 4

Do you prefer to work on a tablet type device or a laptop?

Tablet – 2

Laptop – 8

Question 5

Do you have a second monitor or would find one beneficial?

Don't need a screen – 1

Already have a second screen – 4

Would find a screen useful – 5

Question 6

Once we return to physical meetings, is your intention to attend in person, remote only, or a mix of both?

In person – 3

Mixed of both – 7

Question 7

What do you consider to be the important factors with your device to enable you to undertake your role effectively?

Internet Access / Good connectivity

Would like to see more councillors on the screen

Flexibility of use so it can be used for everything I need

Microsoft Teams is good, other platforms used at outside bodies not so good

Regular updates, ease of use, security and easy access to apps

Happy with current device but an extra screen would be useful

Good screen, light weight and good battery life

Portable and lightweight but need a good screen for reading.