

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Environment Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	28th March 2023 7.00 pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Ruth Burgess – Streetscape Development Manager		
AGENDA ITEM	Item 13		
REPORT TITLE	Paperless Council Meetings		
Background	<p>In light of ongoing financial and environmental pressures, the Council continues to look at identifying ways of doing more with less. Part of the Council’s Business Plan is to achieve this through the implementation of smarter ways of working in a digital age through its implementing new ways of working and delivering services.</p> <p>A number of Councils have completed a transition to paperless meetings over recent years and there is a clear direction of travel in this regard, such that over the course of the next few years it is expected to become standard practice in local government. Across a wide number of Cheshire East service areas, the Council is increasingly encouraging its residents to access services electronically. Moving to paperless meetings provides Members with an opportunity to lead by example in this regard and demonstrate that they too are prepared to embrace new forms of technology to deliver savings, embrace more efficient working practices and reduce the Council’s carbon footprint.</p> <p>Advantages</p> <p>There are a number of potential benefits associated with a move to paperless meetings, which include:</p> <p>Environmental Benefits The primary benefit of paperless meetings is the reduction of the Council’s carbon footprint, highlighting the authority as being environmentally responsible. Paper and stationery usage is reduced, less energy is used to produce printed papers, less printing equipment is required and less transport is involved.</p> <p>Reduced Printing & Postage Costs It is not possible to determine the exact year-on-year spend on printing of meeting papers because departmental recharges for printing do not differentiate between the various types of printing. However, as an indicative guide, the estimated costs for the Council’s 6 principal Committees during 2023 are outlined as follows. These figures are based on the current cost of paper purchase, colour printing at around 4.5 pence per to each Committee Member. The total estimated cost of producing Committee papers during 2023 was just under £571 for approximately 12,690 pages. The frequency of Council and Committee meetings and the size of agendas can vary significantly, and with the addition of ad-hoc Committees, extraordinary meetings, Sub Committees and Working Groups, it is difficult to project a definitive cost saving that paperless</p>		

	<p>meetings would offer going forward, the paperless initiative will still deliver a moderate cost saving.</p> <p>Taking the UK government’s conversion factors for carbon emissions, just 100,000 sheets of A4 paper have a carbon footprint of 6,000kg and require eight trees and 2,000kWh of energy</p> <p>1 x box of 500 sheets is 150kg carbon our 12,690 for 2023/24 financial year is to date around 3,750kg carbon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The tablet which will be set up ready for each members at the committee meeting will also be able not only have access to the meeting they are in attendance at, but access to any Council meeting previous they wish to receive. Dual-hatted members are also able to access Cheshire East Council meeting information through their website so will be able to look at other agendas and minutes whilst at a particular meeting
Proposal	To seek approval for Change Management Committee to undertake a pilot of ‘paperless’ meetings and, subject to the success of the pilot, to extend this approach to all Council and Committee meetings on a phased basis.
Environmental	Removal of paper documents will reduce the Council’s carbon footprint.
Equality	<p>Tablets should improve accessibility for many, due to the ease of zooming in on particular text relative to paper documents. Use of a screen-reader software should be possible on any equipment we select so that those with significant visual impairment can access the content.</p> <p>Spare tablets should be available so that public attendees can access the content. The tablets must be sufficiently easy to use that training is not required and even those with limited digital confidence or tablet experience can easily access the content.</p> <p>Another project is developing a new website for CTC and this must also meet the latest accessibility standards to enable this work to succeed.</p>
Financial	<p>This action will cost (x), but this cost will be recovered within (y) months due to the reduced paper usage.</p> <p>Please note if the above proposal does go forward the financial consideration due to the costings being in around £5K, would require the paper then going on to Full Council for financial approval, The budget line for the purchase is currently £5K a year, Using the full £5K for this project would no room operational replacements (laptops etc)</p>
Decision Requested	To approve.