

**REPORT AUTHOR(S): ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER (HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**SUBJECT: PAPERLESS MEETINGS TRIAL**

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**Background Papers:-**

1. 15 April 2014 - 2013/14 Annual Review of the Fire and Rescue Authority's (FRA) Effectiveness
2. 9 September 2014 – Work Programme and Review of Paperless Meetings
3. 7 March 2016 – Provision of ICT Equipment for Paperless Meetings Trial

**Implications (tick ✓):**

LEGAL		FINANCIAL	✓
HUMAN RESOURCES		EQUALITY IMPACT	✓
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
ORGANISATIONAL RISK	✓	OTHER (please specify)	

*Any implications affecting this report are noted within the report.*

**PURPOSE:**

To consider introducing paperless meetings across all Fire and Rescue Authority, Audit and Standards Committee and Policy and Challenge Group meetings.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That members endorse the approach set out below for the trial of paperless working with elected committee members.

1. Members to respond to the email from Service Assurance Manager to confirm what type of device and operating systems (Apple iOS, windows or android) are loaded on to their device.
2. Members download Modern.gov application from iTunes or google play to their tablet device and register within 48 hours of the email notification.
3. Members agree to continue with the Modern.gov trial at Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group meetings, with the meeting packs in landscape view.

4. That members agree to the following staged approach for implementation of paperless meetings:
  - a. Human Resource Policy and Challenge Group meetings; March 2018
  - b. Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group meetings; June 2018
  - c. Audit and Standards Committee meetings; July 2018
  - d. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting; October 2018 and
  - e. Consider if they require the meeting packs to be in portrait or landscape view
5. That all members agree to utilise bedsfire.com email address to standardise Modern.gov set up and notifications for committee meeting packs.
6. That member's agree to review the trial at the FRA AGM 2019

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## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) continues to implement more effective and efficient ways to work and as such have been utilising paperless meetings at Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group since 2015. BFRS continues to implement further changes with Modern.gov to allow implementation of an environmentally focused system to allow a move to paperless meetings.

## **2 Background to Paperless Meetings**

- 2.1 Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group meetings have been paperless for over 2 years, this has proved to be a successful trial and removes the necessity to print and post large coloured meeting packs for each committee member and attendees.
- 2.2 BFRS have recently completed a transfer from its previous manual committee management process to the automated Modern.gov software package. Modern.gov is utilised by a large number of Authorities including Central and Bedford Borough Councils.
- 2.3 One of the benefits of the new software is the provision of electronic tablet applications which allow for straightforward access to committee papers via either Android or Apple (the two major mobile device platforms for tablets). As such, systems are now in place to allow the trial of paperless meetings to begin at all of the Fire and Rescue Authority's meetings.

## **3 Intended Outcomes**

- 3.1 The primary benefits of paperless meetings are financial and environmental savings made possible through a significant reduction in the amount of printed material produced for each meeting. Without having carried out a trial or agreed the specifics of any scheme it is difficult to provide precise estimates for likely savings, partly because savings per attendee will vary significantly according to which committees they receive paperwork for and the size of the packs. However, in order to give members an outline of the possibility for savings, figures are provided below for information.
- 3.2 BFRS currently prints approximately 50,000 pages every year for its committees at an average cost of £0.04 per page equates to circa £2,000 per annum; excluding the cost of paperwork provided for the public. In addition to this, the majority of agendas are then posted to councillors at an approximate cost of £30 per year per councillor, £1,230 per annum. While these estimated figures are only indicative and subject to multiple variables,

paperless working certainly justifies further investigation in view of the potential financial and environmental savings.

- 3.3 The main purpose of the trial will be for members to experience using tablet devices both for reading materials prior to a meeting and referring to them during it. This is inevitably a significantly different experience from using paper, but will still allow members to add highlighting, annotations, and notes to an agenda pack as required. As such, members will be requested to keep a brief log of their experience with the devices and feedback any comments or issues to the Service Assurance Manager.
- 3.4 The standard tablet application for accessing committee papers is provided purely for public material, meaning that anyone, including members of the public, will be able to download the public sections of any committee agenda. The FRA also has access to a secure version of the application which will allow restricted information, i.e. confidential documentation to be provided to the relevant members.
- 3.5 It is proposed that FRA members already in possession of a suitable Apple iPad or Android device will be encouraged to make use of that device for all meetings.
- 3.6 The specific outcomes of the trial and members' experiences of paperless meetings will shape the steps following the trial's conclusion. In particular, consideration will need to be given to the possibility of the broader use of tablet devices by councillors outside the confines of the initial trial.

#### **4 Organisational Impacts**

- 4.1 **Finance** - Part of the printing costs reflect the lease of a printer held specifically for the production of committee papers. While the base cost of the lease will remain the same regardless of the number of agendas being printed, it is anticipated that a significant move towards paperless working would allow for further rationalisation of printing, by either leasing a smaller and cheaper printer, or by combining printing with other departmental printers.
- 4.2 **Equality** - This trial will provide the opportunity to analyse further the positive and negative impacts of such an approach, as well as identifying any actions that might need to be taken to mitigate any potential risks or negative impacts on those with protected characteristics, before a final decision is taken.
- 4.3 The trial will highlight the Fire and Rescue Authority as modern and forward thinking, and being environmentally responsible, increasing productivity, saving space, and making documentation and information-sharing easier and transparent.
- 4.4 The trial may impact members in their requirement to print out papers for the meetings. It is recommended that any member that requires a 'hard' copy will print out their own packs.
- 4.5 Informational Security of documentation is maintained with the utilisation of the Modern.gov restricted application. This allows for confidential papers to be accessed on tablet devices. Laptop devices will be able to utilise the Services extranet to access Modern.gov, or alternatively these can be emailed out to the members bedsfire email address if members do not have a mobile device.

- 4.6 **Legal** – Statutory public meetings such as Fire and Rescue Authority and Audit and Standards Committee have a legal duty to publish agenda packs within statutory time scales. Modern.gov makes this process more efficient, accessible and transparent.

## **5 Implementation of Modern.gov**

- 5.1 Service Assurance Manager will email Members asking them to confirm what type of device/s and operating systems (Apple iOS, windows or android) are loaded on to each device and if these are personal or professional. The email will include a need to download the Modern.gov application from either iTunes or google play if your device supports application based programmes.
- 5.2 The Service Assurance Manager will register the device/s with Modern.gov under each member's/user's name.
- 5.3 An automated email from Modern.gov will be sent to each member to allow them to register and sync their device/s. The email must be opened on the device registered within 48 hours of receipt.
- 5.4 Once the device has been registered, members will now be able to access the restricted and public agenda packs by selecting either Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue or Beds Fire Private Document Publisher on Modern.gov.
- 5.5 The Service Assurance Manager will directly assign username and temporary passwords to enable set up to be completed.
- 5.6 Members will be sent agenda pack notifications to enable members to access packs in multiple ways:
- i. Email notification with a link to Modern.gov;
  - ii. Email notification containing PDF file embedded;
  - iii. Modern.gov app;
  - iv. Access to Bedfire.com website <https://bedsfireintranet.moderngov.co.uk>
- 5.7 It is recommended that a staged implementation process is agreed. This will assist in the smooth implementation of paperless meetings; the following phased approach is suggested:
- a. Human Resource Policy and Challenge Group meetings; March 2018
  - b. Service delivery Policy and Challenge Group meetings; June 2018
  - c. Audit and Standards Committee meetings; July 2018
  - d. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting; October 2018

## **6 Further developments**

- 5.8 To allow remote access to all restricted FRA agenda packs, BFRS will utilise extranet access to Modern.gov.
- 5.9 Continual training and assistance on the use of Modern.gov will be available from the Service Assurance Manager to ensure all members are able to utilise the capabilities of the system.
- 5.10 ICT help will be available at all FRA and Policy and Challenge Group meetings to ensure devices work and function prior to the start of the meeting.

5.11 All meetings will incorporate a visual version of the agenda pack projected onto a large screen to enable members to actively follow documents being discussed.

5.12 The Service Assurance Manager will be available after each FRS or PCG meeting in March and April 2018 to ensure activation and registration of devices is completed.

## **7 Recommendation**

7.1 That members endorse the approach set out below for the trial of paperless working with elected committee members.

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  - c. Audit and Standards Committee meetings; July 2018
  - d. Fire and Rescue Authority meeting; October 2018 and
  - e. Consider if they require the meeting packs to be in portrait or landscape view
5. That all members agree to utilise bedfire.com email address to standardise Modern.gov set up and notifications for committee meeting packs.
6. That member's agree to review the trial at the FRA AGM 2019

**ZOE EVANS  
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